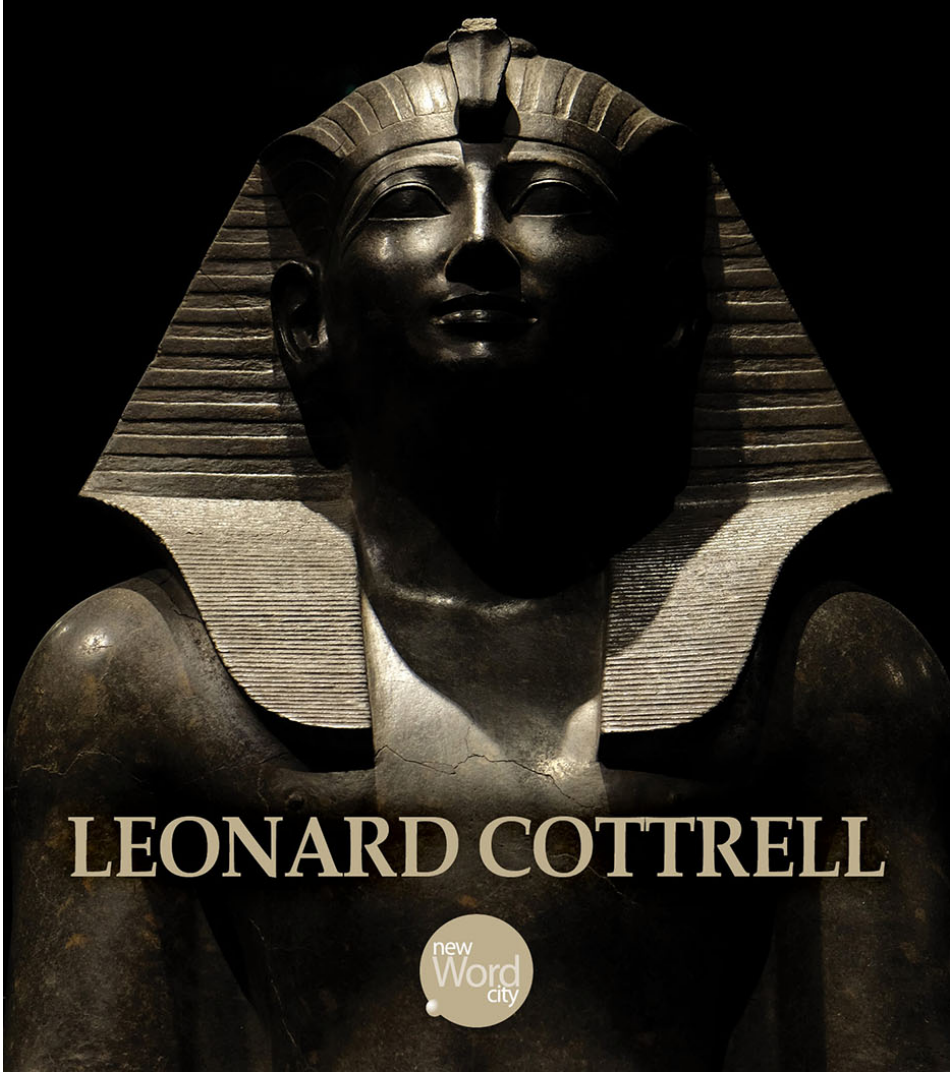
THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS



LEONARD COTTRELL

new Word city

THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS

LEONARD COTTRELL

1

THE GOLDEN VALLEY

Modern Egyptians have a saying: "Those who have drunk of the Nile waters always come back to Egypt." This was certainly true of Howard Carter, a young Englishman who first went to the land of the pharaohs at the age of eighteen to copy pictures and inscriptions in ancient tombs. From his first arrival in the country, Carter was captivated.

He loved the Valley of the Nile, coiling like a green snake through almost 1,000 miles of brown desert. He loved the sunshine, pouring down from the unclouded sky. He was overwhelmed by the majesty of the pyramids, built 5,000 years before, and the mysterious tombs, hewn out of rock in the Valley of the Kings near Thebes (modern-day Luxor); sepulchers that had once contained the bodies of pharaohs laid to rest there over 3,000 years ago.

He loved the great temples, with their columns soaring into the sky, topped by capitals so enormous that 100 men could stand on top of them, shoulder to shoulder; the great river crowded with brown-sailed boats; and the songs of the boatmen that recalled those of ancient Egypt. He was fascinated by the people - the modern Egyptian villagers - who still used the same tools and lived the same kind of life as their ancestors whose pictures he copied.

To Howard Carter, the country was a paradise. From an early age, he had been fascinated by ancient Egypt and had read all he could about it. He talked with people who had traveled there and even tried to learn the difficult hieroglyphs, the "picture writing" of the ancient Egyptians. His parents had been unable to send him to college, but his enthusiasm and curiosity made up for a lack of classical education.

Carter's father was an animal painter in the days when English gentlemen had their favorite horses and hunting dogs depicted in oils, and Howard inherited his artistic talent. After leaving school, he got part-time work copying some of the pictures and inscriptions British scholars brought back from Egypt, and it was one of these scholars, Professor Percy Newberry, who was so impressed by Howard's work that he took him along on his next trip to Egypt in 1891.

Carter learned Arabic, which won him the confidence and trust of the Egyptians. After a time, he obtained a minor post in the Department of Antiquities, the branch of the Egyptian government responsible for their ancient monuments.

From other archeologists, he learned the art of excavation by watching them dig and then practicing it himself. He quickly realized archeology was not just burrowing in the earth hoping to find valuable objects but was actually a search for knowledge: in this instance, information about the ancient peoples who occupied the fertile Nile Valley thousands of years ago. His first duty was to record and then to preserve any monuments, tombs, and objects found, not to regard Egyptology as a treasure hunt. And yet, partly by chance but mainly by

skill, he became the greatest treasure finder of all.

For many years, Carter worked for the Department of Antiquities in ever more responsible jobs. He became an inspector of antiquities, a kind of archeological policeman whose role was to preserve the ancient monuments and also guard them against robbers. Eventually, he was made keeper of the Theban Necropolis, a grand-sounding title for a post that demanded all Carter's skill, knowledge, and understanding. Thebes, in Upper Egypt, (that is, the southern part of the country) was the principal city of ancient Egypt some 4,000 years ago. Here were buried many of the greatest pharaohs, together with their thousands of officials and attendants. Their richly decorated tombs, though plundered thousands of years ago, were still wonderful to look at, but unless they were guarded against the cunning Egyptian tomb robbers (who were secretly encouraged by some European collectors and art dealers), their paintings and sculptures would be remorselessly chipped away.

Carter set to work energetically. He organized *ghaffirs* (guards) among the more trustworthy Egyptians to guard the tombs and temples of Thebes. He put up iron gates. On one occasion, he was shot at by a band of marauders out to rob a certain tomb high up in the limestone cliffs of Thebes, where Carter and his men lay in wait for them. He knew every trick the tomb robbers used. Once, he discovered that a *ghaffir* had been bribed to leave the door to a certain tomb unlocked, but Carter caught the robbers anyway. Another time, he tracked down a skillful thief by measuring and copying the footprint left on the dusty floor of the tomb. It was exciting work, and Carter liked it, but his main objective was to make the Theban necropolis (cemetery) safe, and in the end, he succeeded.

Then, in 1902, Theodore Davies, a wealthy New Yorker, arrived in Thebes, having obtained permission from the Egyptian government to dig in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. Since he was an amateur, he had to employ professional excavators to help him dig, and Carter was chosen for the task.

It is important to understand what this meant. The ancient Egyptians believed in a life to come and a soul - the *ka* – that survived after the death of the body. But they also believed that unless the actual body of the dead person was preserved and protected, the *ka* would also perish. In short, there was no future life for the soul unless the individual's body was also preserved. This meant that for those who could afford it (kings and nobles), it was essential to make a tomb to protect the body against anyone who might afterward come to rob it.

But why steal a dead body? The Egyptian idea of a life after death seems to have been very like the life they led on earth. Therefore, if a person was rich and important, he had to take with him into the grave some of the possessions he had enjoyed on earth. The wealthier the individual, the richer the tomb; and

since the pharaohs were naturally the richest of all, their tombs were larger and more splendid than any and were filled with valuable and beautiful objects, often of gold, silver, and precious stones. A king would take with him his expensive royal robes; his gold ornaments; his gold-encased furniture inlaid with precious stones; his chariots; his weapons; his household objects such as alabaster jars and cups. A queen would be buried with her gold ornaments; her toilet articles; her makeup box, jewel case, and gold-mounted hand mirror; her carrying chair, and so on. This treasure attracted the tomb robbers and made it essential that the tomb either be secret or well protected.

Many years before the Egyptian kings ruled from Thebes, they used to be buried under great stone pyramids. But in time, their successors realized that these enormous monuments, though strong, were so conspicuous that unless properly guarded, a determined and resourceful robber could tunnel underneath, force his way into the burial chamber, and rob the dead king of his belongings. Usually, the robbers also destroyed the body. So, about 1600 BCE, the kings hit on another plan. On the west bank of the river Nile, opposite the city of Thebes, are steep limestone cliffs, with a lonely and easily guarded valley behind them. Within this valley (now called by the Arabs the *Biban el Maluk*), over thirty of the greatest and wealthiest pharaohs were buried. Their workmen tunneled long corridors into the rock, leading to chamber after chamber, each filled with precious objects, until finally, one came to the burial chamber of the royal body. The walls were painted with pictures representing the king passing through the underworld. Each chamber was sealed with massive blocks of stone, and the entrance passage was afterward filled with tons of rubble. Then the entrance was carefully concealed. In this way, the pharaohs of the period of ancient Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom (1555-712 BCE) hoped that their bodies - and therefore their souls - would be preserved for eternity.

Of course, Carter and Davies knew all this and that nearly all the pharaohs of whom any record existed had failed to protect their bodies from robbers. When Davies came to the Valley of the Kings, he understood that all the known tombs were empty, and had been for thousands of years. For even the most careful and elaborate preparations had failed to keep out the ancient Egyptian tomb robber. Sometimes the architect who made the tomb passed on its secrets to his son, so that a time came - perhaps when the tombs were not well guarded - when a group of determined men, working at night, could tunnel their way through the rubble, find the burial chamber, and strip it and its adjoining rooms of treasure. For at least 2,000 years before Davies came on the scene, some thirty of these once magnificent royal sepulchers were open to any passing tourist. One could admire the wall paintings and the skill of the builders who had cut the passages through the rocks, but nothing remained of the furniture, ornaments, and jewelry.

Then why did Davies employ Carter to dig there? Because even though most of the kings' tombs had been robbed, there were still one or two pharaohs whose tombs had not yet been found. There was a remote chance that somewhere among those piles of broken rock and sand, lingered the entrance to an overlooked tomb. So Davies provided the money, and hired a number of archeologists, some who later became famous Egyptologists - Arthur Weigall, Edward Ayrton, J. M. Quibell, and Howard Carter. They worked together from 1902 to 1914, twelve seasons of digging. And they were not entirely unsuccessful. Although no important royal tomb was discovered, Carter found the sepulcher of two important nobles - a man and a woman, called Yuya and Tjuyu - which yielded the best-preserved specimens of chariotry and furniture discovered up to that date. And in 1907, Ayrton and Davies opened a small tomb containing furniture belonging to an important Egyptian queen named Tiy, together with the body of a young man in a royal coffin, who may have been a king. But except for these objects, this tomb had been ransacked thousands of years earlier.

In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, Theodore Davies gave up any further digging, firmly believing there were no more royal tombs to be found. Gaston Maspero, the French director of the Department of Antiquities, agreed with him. But in the same year, another wealthy amateur, George Herbert, earl of Carnarvon, obtained a concession from Maspero to reopen excavations in the Valley of the Kings. No one thought he had much of a chance of finding anything, but inasmuch as he was rich and could finance the excavations, permission was given. And once again, Howard Carter was engaged to carry out the work.

Lord Carnarvon was a wealthy English aristocrat to whom Egyptology was a hobby. It amused him to think he might, with luck, find the body of an unknown pharaoh. Carter had no money, apart from his small salary, and was virtually self-taught, but he knew almost every inch of the valley. He was highly trained, experienced, resourceful, and sagacious. And like all great Egyptologists, he had kept his boyhood enthusiasm through all the years of hard work, frustration, and frequent disappointment. So this oddly matched pair - the English nobleman and the animal-painter's son - began their joint task where Theodore Davies had left off.

To understand what Carter and Carnarvon did, it is necessary to know what the valley was like when they started operations. Today, the site is neat and cleared; the numerous tomb entrances are carefully marked and guarded by iron grilles. The paths leading to them are swept and clean, and the rubble and stone chippings have been tidied into heaps. But in 1914, the place was littered with mounds of debris left by former excavators; here and there, in the steep, barren cliffs were dark holes leading to well-known tombs, such as those of the mighty Pharaohs Amenhotep III, Seti I, Ramses II, and others. But Carter,

essentially a systematic man, had made a careful plan of the valley, on which were indicated the areas that had already been dug. Other areas might have been excavated in former times, but they were at least worth re-digging.

For seven years, the two archeologists painstakingly explored the valley floor and the cliffs above it but found nothing of importance. Archeology has always been an expensive occupation, and though Lord Carnarvon was a comparatively wealthy man, his pocket was not bottomless. He had to think of the cost; he also wanted results. So in the summer of 1922, at a time during the hot season when Egyptian excavations ceased, he summoned Carter to his country home, Highclere Castle, in Britain, best known now as the setting for the television drama *Downton Abbey*, and told him bluntly that he had decided to stop any further work in the Valley of the Kings.

Howard Carter implored his patron to let him dig for just one more season. He pointed out that on his plan was one small, triangular patch of land covered with stone chippings. In the past, it had not been possible to explore this area because immediately above it was the well-known tomb of Ramses VI, which was regularly visited by tourists; and a way had to be kept clear for them. "Let me examine this one area," said Carter, "and if I find nothing, let us finish excavating. Then I shall be certain that there is nothing left to be found."

Carter had another reason for wanting to go on longer. He had studied the "king-lists" of the ancient Egyptians and was convinced that there might be one more royal tomb - that of a king named Tutankhamen - still surviving in the Valley of the Kings. Even if found, it would almost certainly have been robbed in ancient times, like all the rest. But it was worth looking for.

Lord Carnarvon, like many English aristocrats, was a sportsman and something of a gambler. The two men shook hands on the deal, and in the autumn of 1922, Carter went back to Egypt alone, promising to keep his patron informed of any interesting discovery that might turn up. He arrived at Luxor on October 28. Nine days later, November 6, Dr. (now Sir Alan) Gardiner - one of the world's leading authorities on the ancient Egyptian language - and his wife were sitting down to dinner in London when the telephone rang. Gardiner picked up the receiver and heard Lord Carnarvon's excited voice on the line. "Listen to this," Carnarvon said. "It's a telegram from Carter . . . 'At last you have made wonderful discovery in valley; a magnificent tomb with seals intact; recovered same for your arrival. Congratulations. Signed Carter.'"

This is what had happened.

With a few Egyptian workmen, Carter had begun to clear the mound of stone chippings in the triangular area in front of the tomb of Ramses VI. Beneath the layer of sand, his laborers found a flight of stone steps leading downward into the rock. At the bottom of the steps was the entrance to a corridor, but this

entrance was blocked by a wall of rubble covered with plaster. On this plaster, Carter recognized the seal of the priests who had guarded the necropolis 3,000 years ago. And the seal was unbroken.

This meant that whatever chambers lay beyond that sealed doorway could not have been entered for at least 3,000 years unless thieves had broken into the tomb from another direction. As soon as he received the telegram from Carter, Carnarvon sailed for Egypt, and almost immediately after, he arrived at Luxor, gave orders for the sealed entrance to be broken down. Beyond lay a corridor filled with stones which had to be removed carefully. At the end of the corridor was yet another blocked doorway, also plastered and bearing the seal of the necropolis priests. Carter's men made a small hole in the top of the doorway. Then Carter approached, and shining his torch through the narrow aperture, peered inside. At first, he could see nothing. But gradually, as his eyes became accustomed to the dimness, shapes began to emerge from the darkness of the hidden chamber, and everywhere there was the gleam of gold.

"Can you see anything?" asked Carnarvon and his friends anxiously. There was a pause. Then Carter spoke.

"Yes," he said. "Wonderful things . . ."

2

THE BOY PHARAOH

Carter's discovery was the greatest single discovery ever made in Egypt. Of all the thirty-odd royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, only this one had miraculously escaped robbery. For over thirty centuries - throughout half the recorded history of mankind - the objects in that sealed chamber had remained intact and undisturbed.

As soon as the story was out, newspaper reporters from every country poured into Egypt, clamoring for more information. But Howard Carter never forgot his duty as an archeologist. Whatever that chamber and perhaps chambers beyond it might contain, he would not ruthlessly break open the tomb in order to discover its contents quickly. Here was a unique discovery, perhaps never to be repeated in the history of mankind. Carter determined that he would go about his work slowly, systematically, and carefully - recording and photographing and taking every possible measure to preserve the treasures that had lain there since days when the pharaohs ruled Egypt. The work of clearing the tomb took several years, and as each object was brought from the darkness of the sepulcher, it was sent to the Cairo Museum.

Carter and Carnarvon found that there were several chambers cut in the rock. The first, at the end of the corridor, they called the *Antechamber.* It was a treasure trove: caskets of wood plated with gold, ivory, and semiprecious stones; several chariots, also encased in gold; boxes containing royal clothing, weapons, ornaments; great couches ornamented with animal heads; chairs, a beautiful throne, and numerous food offerings in wooden boxes intended to sustain the king in the afterlife.

At the far end of the Antechamber stood two life-size figures of wood, partly covered with gold leaf, guarding the sealed entrance to yet another room. When this doorway was broken down, the archeologists found themselves facing an enormous wooden shrine, almost filling the chamber and covered with thin gold plate. Beyond this burial chamber lay another small room containing other precious objects. One of them, concealed in a wooden box, was a lovely ostrich-feather fan. Sir Alan Gardiner, who was one of the small party allowed to enter the burial chamber when Carter opened it, said the feathers looked as if they had just been plucked. They moved gently in the faint breeze which had entered the tomb. "For me, at that moment," Gardiner said, "that fan completely annihilated the centuries. It gave me an experience that I had never known before, and will never know again. We were the first people to enter that chamber since the king was laid to rest 3,000 years ago, and yet it seemed as if he had been buried only yesterday."

It must have been a tremendous moment for Howard Carter, who had taught himself Egyptology and had now made the richest single archeological discovery in Egypt.

During the ensuing years, he set himself the difficult task of dismantling the

huge wood-and-gold shrine within which, he now knew, lay the body of the king. By this time, he also knew the name of that king. It was, as he had suspected, Tutankhamen, whose name was inscribed in hieroglyphs on the shrine and on many of the precious objects. The shrine which filled the chamber - like a huge rectangular box - enclosed two smaller shrines, which nested one inside the other. Each was covered, inside and out, with sheet gold, and within the innermost one was a sarcophagus (chest) of elaborately carved sandstone. Raising the lid of this stone chest, Carter found a large coffin of wood plated with gold and inset with blue lapis lazuli and red carnelian stones. Inside that outer coffin was a second, also of wood plated with inlaid gold, and bearing at its head a portrait mask of the dead pharaoh. Inside the second coffin was yet a third, this time of *solid gold,* so heavy that it required four men to lift it. This inner coffin was dazzling in its richness and splendor; it was formed in the shape of a mummy, and the rich sheen of the gold was offset by the brilliant blue and red of the lapis and carnelian inlay. Again, the upper part was made in the shape of the royal face, above which the ponderous wig which the pharaohs wore was shaped in gold and semiprecious stones. Across the body was a delicately incised design representing the enfolding arms of the goddess Nut, embracing and protecting the pharaoh, and within the coffin itself lay the mummified body on whose head rested yet another golden portrait mask, even lovelier than those on the coffin lids.

The center of all this richness, the frail little body lying in its mummy wrappings inside its golden coffin, was not that of a monarch grown old in years, like those of Seti I or Ramses III. It was the body of a boy who had probably died at the age of seventeen or eighteen. This was Tutankhamen, "Lord of Lords, King of the South and North, son of Re (or Amen, the sun god)." His titles were carefully inscribed on his coffin and mummy wrappings.

Tutankhamen lived about 1,400 years before the birth of Christ, a convenient date from our point of view because it is roughly halfway between the beginnings and the end of ancient Egyptian civilization. The first pyramid to be erected in Egypt, that of King Zoser, was built about 2800 BCE, fourteen centuries before Tutankhamen was born. Fourteen centuries *after* his death, when the Romans had occupied Egypt, the ancient culture of the Nile Valley, which had lasted for more than 3,000 years, was practically extinct. Soon afterward, even the ancient language was forgotten, and no one could read the inscriptions on the tombs and monuments.

For about 1,800 years, up to a little over 100 years ago, Egypt remained a land of mystery. People went there, marveled at the enormous buildings with their strange inscriptions, the great pyramids and cavernous tombs of the pharaohs; but hardly anything was known of the people who had built them. Then, in 1799, when the French emperor Napoleon invaded Egypt, he took with him a number of learned men to study the monuments and copy them. Among the

most important objects found was a block of stone inscribed with the same text but in two different languages, one known, the other unknown. The inscription dates from the time when Egypt was ruled by a dynasty of kings called the Ptolemies, who spoke Greek. Part of this inscription is in Greek, which could, of course, be read. It is a copy of a decree passed by the General Council of Egyptian priests assembled at Memphis to celebrate the first commemoration of Ptolemy V, king of all Egypt.

The rest of the inscription is in the two main variations of the ancient Egyptian writing. The topmost part is in hieroglyphs already familiar from numerous Egyptian tombs and monuments. The middle part is inscribed in the hieratic form of the ancient Egyptian writing, which was quicker and easier to write - like our handwriting compared with printed letters. But it is the same language. It seemed likely that these two inscriptions in ancient Egyptian conveyed the same message as the known inscription in the Greek tongue. Here, then, was a unique opportunity for scholars to try to interpret the mysterious writing used by the ancient peoples of the Nile Valley. The inscribed block became known as the *Rosetta Stone,* after the place where it was discovered - Rosetta, in the Nile Delta.

For a long time, linguists struggled in vain, until a young Frenchman named Jean-François Champollion discovered an important clue. He had noticed on hundreds of Egyptian monuments that certain hieroglyphic signs were inscribed inside a flattened oval, called a *cartouche.* He suspected that such signs indicated the names of kings and queens. There are several such cartouches on the Rosetta Stone, and Champollion guessed they must stand for the name *Ptolemy.* Since this is a Greek name and its pronunciation is known, the hieroglyphs within the cartouche must represent the sounds *p, t, l,* and *m.* He applied this test to other cartouches. The name *Cleopatra* was found in Greek on an obelisk at Philae, together with a hieroglyphic inscription containing the royal cartouche. Since Cleopatra also contains the sounds *p*, *l,* and *t,* it was now possible to test the accuracy of Champollion's interpretation. And, sure enough, the same symbols were present in the positions they should occupy relative to the other parts of the name.

From these small beginnings, a way was gradually found to learn how the ancient Egyptian language sounded, and afterward, how it was constructed and what it meant. Another important clue to its understanding was the language used in the Coptic (Christian) Church of modern Egypt, which contains elements of the ancient tongue. Other scholars added their contributions - men such as Dr. Robert Young, an Englishman, and François Chabas, a Frenchman. So gradually, after being silent for nearly 2,000 years, the ancient Egyptians began to speak to modern men, and their thousands of inscriptions - on tombs, on temples, on rolls of papyrus (the earliest form of paper, invented by the Egyptians) - could be read. The result was a great revival of interest in ancient

Egypt.

Scholars poured into the country from all over the world: from America, Britain, France, Germany, and other parts of Europe. Some of them devoted their talents to a further unraveling of the writings. Others dug in the Egyptian sands, excavating tombs and monuments, and studying them and the objects brought to light. To both the language students – philologists - and the archeologists, we owe an equal debt for our knowledge of ancient Egypt.

Not that this story is in any way complete. Archeologists are still digging in Egypt, and other scholars are still studying and teaching Egyptology in the colleges and universities of the world. Much more remains to be found, and even more to be learned. But thanks to the devoted work of these men and women of many lands, we now know more about ancient Egypt and its people than any other ancient civilization in the world.

3

BY RIVER TO THEBES

The year was about 1350 BCE Soneb, lounging near the stern of the boat in a comfortable cabin spread with cushions and protected by a gaily colored awning, idly watched the flotilla of similar craft moving behind his own, all going steadily up the river Nile from the direction of the Delta toward Memphis. The boat was about fifty feet long, with upswept bows and stern, like a huge canoe. The sun glinted on its gold-embellished mountings and on the gold ornaments worn by Soneb's dark-eyed, olive-skinned companions. Neither Soneb nor his friends wore much; it was too hot for thick clothes. The men, generally small-boned and slender, wore a white kiltlike garment of thin linen; above the waist their bodies were bare, save for necklaces of red and blue beads and other ornaments on their wrists. The few women wore a single loose-fitting gown of semi-transparent linen hanging from one shoulder, which covered them from neck to ankles but left one shoulder bare. Their necklaces and bracelets and anklets were even richer than those of the men, and their feet were shod with light sandals. All of them wore dark wigs that came almost to their shoulders, not only for ornament, but because they protected their heads from the fierce sun which beat down out of a cloudless blue sky. In spite of the breeze blowing off the brown water, in spite of the shade thrown by the sun awning, everyone on the boat was always conscious of the dry, burning heat.

Most of the party were young, some in their teens; they laughed a lot and chattered incessantly. A little distance away sat a group of older men who, from their grave and solemn appearance, seemed to be senior officials. With them were one or two shaven-headed priests. They talked quietly among themselves, only occasionally casting a sharp glance at the merry party in the after-cabin.

The principal members of this party were a young couple; the boy was about seventeen, his companion probably a little younger. Reclined on silken cushions, and each resting on an elbow, they leaned toward each other, looking down at a small gaming board which lay between them. The board was rectangular and smaller than a modern chessboard, but in other ways, reminiscent of one. There were squares for the pieces, and under the board, a little box was fixed to hold the pieces when not in use.

Both the boy and the girl were more richly dressed than their companions, and each wore an elaborately beautiful headdress, partly of gold and enriched with carnelian and lapis lazuli. On the boy's forehead were two gold ornaments representing hooded cobras; the girl wore only one such ornament. Those cobras were the insignia of royalty, for the two youngsters were the king and queen of Egypt. The boy was Tutankhamen; the girl was his wife, Ankhesnamen.

They were both beautiful in a peculiarly childlike way, and yet beneath the

childishness, there was a strange seriousness and gravity. For in ancient Egypt, children matured early; Ankhesnamen - at only sixteen - had already borne two daughters who had died at birth. And not only was Tutankhamen the pharaoh, king of the South and North; he was also regarded by his people as the son of their greatest god, Amen. This explains why his name - Tutankhamen - includes that of the god, as indeed does that of Ankhesnamen.

Soneb, like many of the young people with the boy-king and his wife, belonged to a family related to the royal house. When a king was permitted to have several wives, as he was in ancient Egypt, he naturally had numerous children; these and their children in turn usually occupied positions at court. Soneb was a young scribe, and it was part of his job to keep written records of meetings. That was why he was accompanying the young king on one of his official journeys. At the moment, he had nothing to do, and curious to see what was happening up forward, he decided to leave the cabin for a while.

As soon as he left the shade, he felt the sun's heat strike in a heavy wave. On either side stretched the great river, over half a mile wide at that point. A big square sail flapped overhead, but there was little wind to fill it, and most of the impetus propelling the boat came from the rows of sweating, brown-skinned rowers who grunted at each stroke on the heavy oars.

Up near the bows, a thick-set black man was beating time on a bronze gong, and from across the water - where the companion ships were sailing - came the *boom . . . boom . . . boom* . . . of other gongs, mingled with the rhythmic chant of the men. It was tough work rowing upstream against the Nile, and this monotonous, never-ending chanting helped the men to keep going, even though their muscles were cracking under the strain.

Behind Soneb stood the steersman, skillfully handling his huge oar while setting a course that would stay clear of sandbanks and take advantage of the slight wind. He was taking them near the east bank where naked field-laborers bent over the furrows of rich brown earth. Near the shore were groves of palm trees, a lush green carpet of wheat fields, and here and there, huddles of mud-and-reed huts - the workers' villages.

The men and women who toiled in the fields from sunrise to sunset were the mainstay of Egypt's wealth. It was their labor that fed not only themselves, but the builders who erected the palaces, temples, and tombs of the "Great Ones"; the craftsmen who made their beautiful furniture, statuary, and ornaments, and wove the fabrics for their clothes. It was their labor, too, that supported the multitude of priests and officials who governed the country: the scribes who kept records of the wealth, the tax collectors who taxed it, and the priests who honored the great gods whose temples were greater even than the palaces of the pharaohs.

More than 2,000 years before Tutankhamen was born, the ancestors of these people had lived in little separate communities strung along 1,000 miles of the mighty river Nile. In those far-off days, they could only produce enough food to support themselves. At that time, there were no great officials, few craftsmen, and no one who knew how to make great buildings. But about 1,800 years before Tutankhamen, one powerful chieftain marched along the river from the south, with a great army, and brought the whole land under his control. Then, over the years, his successors - all powerful kings - organized the people of the Nile Valley in such a way that they could produce a surplus of wealth above their own requirements. It was this surplus which brought into being a new class of people who did not have to grow food themselves but were free to develop other skills, such as building, sculpture, metalwork, carpentry, writing, and so forth.

Thus the civilization of ancient Egypt had been born, and thus it had been maintained. All owed allegiance to one man, the pharaoh; but in 1350 BCE, the pharaoh was a mere boy, and the real work of governing the country rested with his high officials, men of great wealth and power. Such officials were so powerful, indeed, that sometimes they had overthrown the king and become pharaohs themselves.

Though he was still a boy, Tutankhamen knew this well enough, which was the one reason why he had little love for some of the officials who were accompanying him on his Nile journey. One, in particular, he suspected: the tall, powerfully built man with the stern face who was now entering the cabin to inform the royal couple that they were approaching Memphis and it was time to prepare for the official reception.

This man, Harmhab, was about sixty and commander in chief of the army. His manner was courteous and respectful enough, but neither Tutankhamen nor Ankhesnamen liked him. Harmhab had been one of the closest supporters of Ikhnaton - Tutankhamen’s uncle - who had tried to introduce a new and purer religion in rebellion against the powerful priests of Amen. Yet when Ikhnaton died and the Amen priesthood reassumed power, Harmhab had quickly switched his allegiance. After Ikhnaton’s death, Smenkhare, who was possibly Tutankhamen’s brother, had reigned for a few years. Then he too died, leaving the throne to Tutankhamen. And during that time, Harmhab had become even more powerful.

Ankhesnamen, who had put aside her cumbersome headdress, frowned as she put it on again, assuming a suitably regal attitude to receive the citizens and officials of Memphis. Together, the young king and queen mounted the foredeck and stood in the hot sunshine as the royal barge glided towards the quay while sailors furled the sail, and the oarsmen, under the shouted commands of their captain, maneuvred the glittering vessel. Tutankhamen and Ankhesnamen, in

their most splendid royal robes, stood absolutely still, looking like one of the carved statues of themselves which still adorn the temple of Amen in Thebes. The river, though still wide, was now somewhat narrower, and Tutankhamen, letting his eyes wander from the approaching quayside and its rows of waiting officials, looked toward the west bank.

There, piercing the empty blue sky, rose huge triangular masses of stone, dark against the westering sun. The pyramids, now 5,000 years old, were old to Tutankhamen, too, for they had been built nearly 1,500 years before he was born.

Tutankhamen knew they were the Houses of Eternity (tombs) of his long-dead ancestors; great kings such as Zoser, Snefru, Khufu, Khafre, men who had also worn on their foreheads the royal cobra which now weighed heavily on his own brow. Long before Tutankhamen's time, the kings had ceased to build pyramids, but every king still had his royal tomb. Tutankhamen's own tomb was already being carved out of the Theban hills. There, someday, he would rest; he would meet his royal ancestors, gods such as he would one day become.

What was it like to become a god? Did they play games and make love? Was there any good hunting in that dim world beyond the grave, the world of which the priests seemed to know so much?

As Tutankhamen was contemplating these matters, he felt a sharp nudge in his side. He glanced sideways at Ankhesnamen, who was looking as regal as her tiny body would permit. Why had she nudged him at this most solemn moment, when they were about to receive the obeisance of the citizens of Memphis, which had been the capital of Egypt under such kings as Snefru and Khufu? Then he realized that he had absentmindedly picked up his bow, which he had brought with him in the hope of doing a little shooting - if only Harmhab would allow him a rest from his official duties. But this was not the right moment to be clutching it, when he was expected to be as kingly as possible.

Tutankhamen gave a quick, imploring look to the officials grouped solemnly behind him. But Harmhab had already noticed. He darted forward quickly, took the weapon, handed it to a servant, and then rapidly resumed his place, his eyes unsmiling. The royal trumpeters onboard raised their instruments, and their brazen salute was answered from the quayside. As one man, the waiting crowd prostrated themselves on the sunlit stones, and a great shout was chorused by the priests:

Life, Prosperity, Health to Pharaoh! Lord of Lords!

King of the South and North! Son of Re!

The two little figures, under their high, glittering crowns, and their attendants

froze to the stiffness of an Egyptian tomb painting. Only the great ostrich-feather fans, held above the royal pair, stirred gently in the breeze as the vessel touched the quayside.

4

PEWERO, THE HUNTER

More than 1,000 years before Tutankhamen, Memphis had been the capital of Egypt and home of a great dynasty of kings. The people of Memphis were fond of reminding everyone of this, particularly if the listener came from Thebes, the capital of the new Egypt ruled by Tutankhamen. Soneb was a Theban, so this patronizing attitude of the Memphites annoyed him. He thought they were old-fashioned, living on their past. Thebes, more than 400 miles farther south up the Nile, was a livelier and more progressive city. The king lived at Thebes with his court and the prime minister and all the great officials; whereas Memphis was just a dull provincial town, full of doddering priests and enormous, half-neglected temples.

Privately, Tutankhamen agreed with Soneb, but as head of the state he had to make official visits to the provincial centers, of which Memphis was one. These separate provinces, or nomes, might be compared with the separate states of the United States. As in America, each nome or state had its governor, ruling his own territory, but ultimately responsible to the controlling power of the pharaoh. It is only a rough parallel, because a U.S. state governor has far more independence than did the governor of an Egyptian nome; nevertheless, there is a faint resemblance. The Egyptian nomes developed out of the independent tribal areas which existed in the Nile Valley thousands of years before the country was united under one king. Also, Memphis could claim to be more important than most provincial towns; Menes - the first pharaoh to unite Egypt - set up his capital in Memphis, and it was from this city that the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (2780-2100 BCE) - the pyramid builders - ruled for more than 600 years.

Nevertheless, Soneb thought Memphis was dull. On occasions when he was off duty, he seized the chance to skip away from boring gatherings to enjoy something more congenial like hunting.

It is important to bear in mind the class to which Soneb belonged. In ancient Egypt, as in most modern countries, social position depended on birth and education. Broadly speaking, the population was divided into two main groups: the literate and the illiterate, the educated and the uneducated. And while it was possible for a man of poor parents to acquire an education and rise to a high rank, it was the exception rather than the rule in ancient Egypt. In general, educated sons came of educated parents, and power tended to rest for long periods in the hands of one class. The illiterate masses - those who had not mastered the secret of writing, which was the key to power - were the field laborers. These men and women worked on the land when they were not helping to build monuments, tombs, and temples; and they lived on what they produced. Anything they produced above their own requirements went to the state through taxation. The richer people were also taxed according to the amount of land and other property they possessed. Few peasants owned the land they worked.

It is also essential to remember that literacy and education were confined to men only. The women of poor families worked in the fields and raised children who also, except for a fortunate few, became laborers. The women of the wealthier families did not learn to read and write; such accomplishments were not considered necessary for them. Young girls of good families in Egypt learned domestic crafts and how to run a household (consisting mainly of servants). They might also have learned music and dancing, for many such young women became priestesses, in which case such skills were necessary. But in the main, their task was to prepare themselves to be the wife - or one of the wives - of some important man, and the mother of his children. Though it was customary for the wealthier Egyptians to have more than one wife, one woman was always given precedence above the rest, and her rights were closely safeguarded by law.

Soneb, a boy of the upper class, had more freedom than most. One day, while the king and his advisers were listening to a dull report by the governor of Memphis, he and his friend Pewero sailed across the Nile to go hunting.

Like Soneb, Pewero was also a scribe. Both had been to the priestly colleges and learned the difficult art of reading and writing. But the word *scribe* did not mean they intended to spend the rest of their careers as clerks. (The nearest modern equivalent to the ancient Egyptian word for scribe might be *graduate,* although there were then no universities in the modern sense.) Soneb had only the vaguest ideas of what he intended to do in later life. He thought he might become a lawyer or a doctor, or perhaps, like his father, seek to obtain a high position in the government. Pewero hoped to become a soldier and serve in the king’s foreign wars.

Pewero was an active, restless, athletic youngster. As Soneb sprawled lazily in the boat while the swarthy Nile boatmen hauled on the sail, he watched his friend standing poised in the prow, a spear in his hand. Pewero was looking for a basking crocodile. In the bottom of the boat were a pile of other weapons - spears, bows, arrows, and a number of strangely shaped sticks, not unlike boomerangs, which were used for hunting the wild fowl of the marshes. Thousands of years ago Soneb’s ancestors had hunted in order to live, but now hunting was only a sport for young aristocrats like these two boys.

In those days, the Nile abounded in game of all kinds. Among the papyrus reeds along the banks lurked thousands of wild geese; in the deserts beyond the cultivated land were lion, leopard, gazelle, ibex, and other wild animals no longer found in Egypt. In fact, the Nile had everything necessary for man. Every year, during the great flooding, it brought down millions of tons of mud from the far-off mountains of Abyssinia (now called Ethiopia). This fertile mud, spread across the land by the flooding river, perpetually renewed the richness of the soil so that several crops might be grown throughout the year. There was

hardly any rain, but that didn't matter. Long before Soneb's time, wise men had learned how to control the river; how to predict the time of its flooding by watching the stars; how to measure the amount of its rise; how to conserve the water by holding it back in an elaborate system of canals and channels so that it would continue to irrigate the land during the long period between annual floodings.

Over on the far bank, Soneb could see men working the *shaduf,* a primitive water pump consisting of a bucket on the end of a long pole balanced on a pivot with a weight at the other end. Up and down went the bucket, up and down, emptying water from one channel to another while the man working it intoned a monotonous, melancholy chant. Farther away, a group of women stooped low over the field of yellow corn, swinging sickles and chanting another song of which Soneb could just catch the words: "The grain has ripened," sang the laborers, "and it says to us 'Harvest me.'"

Then the song changed as an old man took up a new chant, and the rest joined him: "O men, women, and children," sang the old man in a quavering tenor. "Rejoice in the produce of the fields at this time. Rejoice in the glory of Menena, your lord. . . ."

Neither Soneb nor Pewero could know that men would still know the words of those songs 3,000 years after they were dead. An Egyptian artist, painting scenes in the tomb of the landowner Menena, inscribed them on a wall, together with brightly colored pictures of the fields and the bending backs of the harvesters. So, even now, visitors to Egypt are still able to see that scene and read the words of the song.

Suddenly there was a heavy splash and a warning shout from the boatmen. A large crocodile, its snout just visible above the brown water near the bank, had unexpectedly moved. Pewero's spear hissed through the air but fell short, and the beast escaped. The boatmen laughed while Pewero cursed as he flopped down on his seat.

The boat grounded in the shallows on the west bank. Soneb and Pewero leaped ashore, and the boatmen followed, carrying the weapons. For an hour or so, Pewero demonstrated the difficult art of hurling the throwing stick, which required great skill. Soneb moved quietly among the reed marshes behind the boatmen, who were flushing the birds up ahead. As clouds of wild geese rose above the waving reeds, the boys' throwing sticks soared through the air. Sometimes they brought down a bird which was retrieved - not by a dog but a cat. The ancient Egyptians trained cats as retrievers.

When the day grew hot, everyone retired to a shady spot where the boatmen prepared the meal: fish grilled over an open fire, roast goose, bread, and strong beer which the boatmen had brought in a large earthenware jar. There

was wine, too, if the boys had wanted it, but hunting is thirsty work, and beer was more thirst-quenching.

After a rest, the two boys walked a short distance toward the desert, where a trim chariot awaited them, drawn by a pair of fast horses. It was agreed between them that, at first, Soneb would drive while Pewero carried the bow. Afterward, they would change places. Driving a light chariot was an art much admired by young Theban nobles. It was not easy over the rough desert surface, for the horses were powerful, and the chariot had no springs and could easily be overturned. But it was fast. The trick in hunting by chariot was to wait under cover until the beaters had turned the game toward the driver, who then set his horses at full gallop so that his companion could come within bowshot.

There was a shout from the beaters, who were out of sight beyond a rocky bluff, and suddenly a herd of gazelles darted from cover. Soneb flicked the horses with his whip, and the chariot, swinging crazily, lurched forward at an oblique angle toward the swift-running animals. Pewero, poised first on one foot and then on the other, was shouting with excitement. He stood with his bow bent, watching the quarry. As they came within range, the bowstring twanged. Missed! Soneb gave the right-hand rein a tug in order to bring the galloping horses nearer to the running prey. Again and again, the arrows sped from Pewero's bow, and two gazelles rolled in the sand and then lay still. The beaters gathered them up. Soneb handed the reins over to his friend and took up the bow himself. He managed to kill three more gazelles. So the afternoon wore on until, as the sun began to sink beyond the level sand, called an end to the good day of sport. It had been a good day.

The sun was just dipping below the western horizon as Soneb and Pewero, sprawling lazily in the bottom of the boat and only half-listening to the creak and splash of the oars, watched the west bank slip farther and farther away. The boatmen, who were superstitious, did not like to be on the west bank after nightfall, and though Pewero and Soneb pretended to make fun of such fears, neither of them would really have liked to find himself alone there. For the west was the home of the dead.

5

HOW AN EGYPTIAN SAW THE WORLD

Why was the west the home of the dead? An ancient Egyptian like Soneb would not have been likely even to ask such a question. Egypt had existed for thousands of years before he was born, and the answers to all questions were known. There had always been a Nile - since the world began. There was also another Nile under the earth (which was flat, of course). Away to the west, one could see the setting sun. That crimson disc was a god; his name was Amen-Re, and he traveled across the sky each day in a boat. Why? What an absurd question! How could he travel otherwise? Everyone in Egypt traveled by boat, so obviously, Amen-Re must have moved in the same way. In any case, Soneb would have explained, in the tombs, one could see pictures of the sun god traveling through the twelve caverns, or chambers, of the underworld at night. It is then that his sacred boat moved along Nile-under-the-Earth so that he could mount the eastern sky again on the following day. How otherwise could he get to the east during the long night hours?

Amen-Re was born each day in the east, and he died each day in the west. That was why the west was the home of the dead, or "the Westerners," as the dead were called. That was why all the tombs and pyramids were on the west bank of the Nile, whereas the towns and homes of the living were on the east. It was all perfectly logical.

Even well-educated people like Soneb and Pewero preferred not to be on the west bank after nightfall because the spirits of the dead lived there. They would go over during the day, of course. In fact, Soneb often went there to make offerings at the tomb of his uncle, who was buried in the western cliffs opposite Thebes. He didn't go inside the burial chamber because that was sealed. But there was a pleasant little hall in front of the tomb, with an offering table, and there at regular intervals, Soneb and other members of his family brought food and drink for the *ka,* or spirit, of the dead. There was a life-size statue, exactly like Soneb's uncle, in this little hall. It had to be like him, otherwise the uncle's *ka* would not recognize him when it came out of the tomb to inhabit the statue and receive the offerings.

How did the *ka* leave the burial chamber to enter the Hall of Offerings when the chamber was sealed up? That is another absurd question! The *ka* was a spirit, immaterial, not like the human body. It could pass easily through walls; it could even leave the tomb and sit outside and "enjoy the north wind." There was an inscription inside the tomb which said so. In fact, the Egyptian word which modern scholars translate as "tomb" actually means "House of Eternity," a much better description. A tomb was the house of a dead man or woman, where his or her spirit lived. And since it had to last forever, naturally it was made of stone, not like the house Soneb's family used on earth. That had only to last for a lifetime and was therefore built of mud brick and plaster.

Only one disaster could prevent a dead man from continuing to live in the world

to come; and that could only occur if someone entered the burial chamber and robbed and destroyed the mummy. That was why the ancient Egyptians took such trouble to preserve and protect the bodies of their loved ones - if they were rich enough to afford it. For the priests said (and they must know) that once the body was destroyed, the *ka* would also die.

Otherwise, it could never die. Life did not end when the heart ceased to beat and the body was laid in its House of Eternity. The "Westerners" went on living just as they had lived on earth. If a man had been a farmer, he went on farming. If he owned great estates and many servants, he would have them in the afterlife. If he was a sailor, he would have his ship; if a general, he would have his army. If he had been a servant of the pharaoh, he would continue to hold office under him in the life to come. There was no death, only a change.

But there were differences. Tutankhamen, for instance, was the pharaoh, which meant that he was the son of Amen-Re, and therefore a god. When he left this earthly life, as some day he must, it would not be with him as it was with ordinary men and women. He would sail with Amen-Re in his sun boat on its daily journey across the sky and its nightly journey through the twelve chambers of the Duat, the underworld. That is why the paintings on the wall of his tomb are different from others, in the tomb of Soneb's uncle, for instance. And there were other differences. The pharaoh would be buried separately from his nobles and high officials. His tomb would be in a separate valley reserved only for kings. And his queen, Ankhesnamen, would not be buried with him, but in a tomb of her own among her sister queens. This was not true of other wives. When Soneb's aunt died, she would be buried alongside his uncle.

All of these things had been known for so long that there was no question they were true. However, Soneb had to admit there were times when things seemed puzzling, particularly when Pewero started one of his arguments. Pewero was a restless fellow. Soneb liked him, but sometimes he wished his friend would not raise so many awkward questions. Pewero thought too much; that was his trouble. He came from a military family; his father was a soldier, and so was his father's father before him. And soldiers traveled to the pharaoh's foreign dominions, or at least they had in the old days when Egypt was often at war. Pewero had told Soneb about the land of the Mountain Dwellers, which lay far away to the northeast. There, he said, there was another Nile, which, instead of running from south to north as any good river should, ran from north to south! To the Egyptians, who had known only the Nile, the direction of flow of any river had to be northward; therefore, they explained this foreign river awkwardly as "the river which in flowing northward flows southward." (Today we call this river the Euphrates.)

Pewero's father had told him that in the countries bordering this strange "other Nile" there were peoples who lived in a manner different from the Egyptians

and who worshiped other gods. They dressed differently, too, because in their countries, the land was not always flat as in Egypt, but there were mountains which pierced the sky. And if you were to travel in those mountains, said Pewero, a cold white stuff might fall from the sky. Never having left Egypt, Soneb had hardly ever seen rain, let alone snow, so he was tempted to dismiss this as an old soldiers' tale. But it might have been true. And if it was true, as Pewero said, then who were these strange foreign gods whom the Egyptian priests had never heard of? If Amen-Re was lord of the whole earth, and Egypt was the center of the earth, then what were these foreigners doing when the world was created?

Of course, Soneb knew that the foreigners did exist. He, himself, had seen them with their ships in the docks at Thebes. And some of their most beautiful women, brought back as captives, had married Egyptians. One of them even married a pharaoh, and some of her blood flowed in the veins of Tutankhamen. But it was all puzzling and best left to the priests to work out.

The priests understood and could explain everything. They said that in the beginning of time, only the ocean existed, and on that ocean appeared an egg from which the sun god was born. He had four children: Geb and Shu, Tefnut and Nut. Planting their feet on Geb, Shu and Tefnut raised their sister to the sky. Thus Geb became the earth; Shu and Tefnut, the atmosphere; and Nut, the wonderful sky Soneb could now see above him now.

Then Geb and Nut had four children: Osiris, Isis, Nephthys, and Set. Osiris became king of Egypt and governed wisely; but Set, the evil god, was jealous of him and of his sister Isis, whom he married (in ancient Egypt royal brothers and sisters often married). Eventually Set slew Osiris, cutting up his body and scattering the pieces throughout Egypt. Isis gathered them together again and sought the help of Anubis, the jackal god of the cemeteries. Anubis then joined the bits together and made the corpse live again. Even so, Osiris could not rule on earth but became god of the dead who judges souls in the underworld. As for Set, he was killed in the end by Horus, the son of Osiris. Set took the form of a crocodile, but Horus killed him with his spear and so succeeded to the throne, and all the kings of Egypt to that very day were his descendants.

Everyone knew these things, so why should Pewero have questioned them? Part of the trouble was that Pewero's father had served as a youth in the court of Ikhnaton, that heretic whose name was no longer mentioned. Ikhnaton had said there was only one god, whom he called the *Aten,* and that all the rest were imposters. But a time came when the heretic died, and the true, ancient gods of Egypt came into their own again - and now Amen-Re ruled the earth. Tutankhamen, the present pharaoh, acknowledged the rule of Amen-Re. Hadn't he had his name changed from Tutankhaten to Tutankhamen, even if he still had, scattered around his palace in Thebes, furniture and ornaments bearing

the symbol of the heretic king's god?

Tutankhamen and Ankhesnamen were brought up in Ikhnaton's court, so naturally, it took some time for them to adjust themselves to the old, true religion. Personally, Soneb shared the view of his father, who believed that all the trouble had started in the time of Ikhnaton's father when Syrian women came to Egypt with their foreign customs and gods. But now all was well again. The old gods were established, and Amen-Re ruled over Egypt as he had always done. Egypt was in the beginning, was now, and ever would be. All wisdom, all knowledge, was found here.

Like all Egyptians, Soneb was certain Egypt would last forever. Look at those pyramids silhouetted against the sunset. Some of them had been built more than 1,400 years before either Soneb or Pewero were born. But if he looked inside the tombs of the noblemen who attended the ancient pharaohs who built them, he would find almost exactly the same kind of scenes as those depicted in his uncle's tomb - the same kind of scenes Soneb himself had watched on his hunting trip. There would be men hunting wild fowl in the reed marshes, hurling the throwing stick. Admittedly, there would be no scenes of hunting from chariots, because the horse and chariot had only been introduced into Egypt during the past few hundred years; the pyramid builders hadn't even had the wheel. But there would be sculptured reliefs of men sowing, men harvesting, men in boats just like the one in which Soneb now sat, priests making offerings, and, of course, the figures of the immortal gods. Nothing had changed in 1,500 years, and nothing would ever change, for this was Egypt. This was the world, or most of it.

Now it was quite dark, and lights glittered on the black water—lights from the torchbearers who were waiting on the quay of Memphis to light Soneb and Pewero home. The boatmen threw out their ropes to secure the little vessel and then helped the two boys ashore. Tired but happy, they were both glad of the carrying chairs which took them back through the dark to their lodgings. Tomorrow would be a new day. They would continue their journey upriver to Thebes.

6

JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

The following day, the royal flotilla moved away from the quays of Memphis. It traveled southward up the Nile, its oars threshing the brown water to the brazen rhythm of the gongs while the great river gradually narrowed. The pyramids opposite Memphis seemed to glide away behind them; the brown desert pressed in on either side so that, at times, there was only a narrow strip of cultivated land between the desert cliffs.

The Nile twists and coils like a snake, and at every turn, there were mud-brick villages, sometimes stone temples, and in the rocky limestone escarpments, one could see the black, gaping holes of tomb entrances. More and more pyramids rose out of the heat-haze above the west bank. Dahshur, Hawara, Illahun . . . on and on stretched the splendid line. These were the plundered tombs of kings who came long after Snefru, Khufu, Khafre, and other monarchs of the Old Kingdom (2780-2100 BCE). When Soneb traveled from Memphis to Thebes, he was traveling forward through 1,500 years of history.

The records he had studied at the College of Scribes told him a lot about this period in Egyptian history - how, after nearly 700 years, the dynasty of pharaohs founded by Menes (or Narmer) had ended, and that there had been a gap when the records were scanty and obscure. During this period, which lasted about 150 years, the strong hands which had controlled Egypt as one nation loosened their grip. For a time, there had been civil war when petty kinglets warred with each other for mastery of the country. In those days, kings no longer built great pyramids as their ancestors had when the land was united and prosperous. Those times had been bad, the priests said.

But when a new race of pharaohs took possession of the land, once again, Egypt had become strong and great. The pyramids which were coming into view on Soneb’s right had been built by later pharaohs; their tombs were neither as large nor as splendid as their predecessors, but they were still tremendous, even in ruin. Those kings had done great works in Egypt. They had pushed the Egyptian frontier southward into Nubia. Sesostris I carried the war against the black men - the Nubians - even above the Second Cataract of the Nile. Amenemhet II reopened the gold mines of Sinai in the northeast, and Sesostris III sent his engineers to cut a great channel - 260 feet long and thirty-four feet wide - through the granite of the First Cataract so that his war galleys could sail farther southward. Before his reign, these cataracts, or rapids, had prevented the Egyptian warships from sailing any farther into Nubia. The same pharaoh also invaded Syria for the first time and brought back rich tribute from the conquered Asians. Then there was Amenemhet III, who cut another channel through the west bank of the Nile, not far from Memphis, in order to irrigate the low-lying land which is now called the Faiyum. Four thousand years after Amenemhet III, that enormous artificial lake surrounded by fertile fields and broad canals is still admired as a memorial to a great king.

These pharaohs, who reigned from Thebes, belonged to what we now call the Middle Kingdom (2100-1700 BCE), which lasted about 500 years. At the end of that period - nearly 400 years before Soneb and Tutankhamen were born - Egypt had again collapsed, this time under the impact of foreign invasion from the northeast. Then for 150 years Egypt was ruled by foreigners, the so-called Shepherd Kings, from Asia. It had been a period of ignominy and disgrace; the priests did not like to talk about it. But in the end, Egypt rose again under a yet more glorious dynasty of pharaohs, those of the New Kingdom, which had begun in 1555 BCE. The first of these had been great warriors such as Sekenre (who was killed in battle) and Ahmose. Not only had they driven out the Asians from Soneb's homeland, but they had pursued them far into their own countries, conquering their territory, occupying their towns, and establishing colonies so that never again should foreigners sweep down into Egypt and rule over its people.

Other mighty pharaohs had followed, many of them warriors; there was Amenhotep I, Thutmose II, and the even greater Thutmose III, who led his armies out of Egypt on seventeen successful campaigns. Soneb had seen his statues in the temple of Amen-Re at Thebes. He was shown as a little plump man with a strong, yet kindly, face. It was Thutmose III who had first crossed that strange "Other Nile" in Asia, about which Pewero liked to make his clever remarks, the "Nile-which-in-flowing-northward-flows-southward." Soneb had seen other pictures of Thutmose III, firing arrows from his war chariot and smashing in the heads of his bearded Asian enemies. He was a mighty king and terrible in battle. He had brought back rich treasure from the foreign lands - gold, precious stones, cattle, women, and slaves. After his time, the kings of the Asian countries used to send their princes to be educated at the Egyptian court, and their most beautiful princesses to be wives of Egyptian noblemen.

Like the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom, the warrior kings of the New Kingdom ruled from Thebes, which had become the richest and most powerful city in the world. Every king vied with his predecessor in building larger and more splendid monuments. Amen, the ram-headed tribal god of Thebes, was recognized to be the same deity as Re, the sun god of Memphis. So the two gods were united under a new name, *Amen-Re.* Amen-Re's temple at Thebes was now the wonder of the world, so huge that it seemed to the foreigners who visited Egypt that it could not have been built by human hands. It was not only a place of worship like a church, it also had workshops where craftsmen made beautiful objects for the god and his servants; a treasury in which was stored the wealth brought back by the pharaohs from their foreign conquests and was a school and university, where Soneb, Pewero, and hundreds of young Theban noblemen first learned the secret of the writings.

Truly Amen-Re was a great god, in fact, the King of Gods. Now that the insult offered by Ikhnaton, that hated heretic, had been wiped out, Egypt was strong

again. Pewero said that before long, the pharaoh would once again lead his armies out to battle against foreign enemies, the Asians and the Nubians. It was true that there had been little fighting in recent years, which was why Harmhab, commander of the army, was so restless and bitter. Tutankhamen, like his uncle Ikhnaton, had little taste for warfare. Soneb had heard rumors that new enemies were attacking the Egyptian colonies in Syria and the king was doing little to stop them. Yet perhaps Pewero was exaggerating these rumors because he wanted to become a soldier and march into Syria as had his father and grandfather before him.

Such reflections passed through Soneb's mind as the last pyramid dropped out of view and was lost behind a bend in the river. Now there was only a narrow strip of green fertile land coiling through the desert; there were neither pyramids nor tombs, only red-fissured, sun-scorched cliffs which echoed the steady boom of the gongs as the oars bit the water. It was very hot. For most of the time, the young pharaoh and his queen dozed under the sun awning, waking each day only when they approached the town at which they were to stay the night. It is a long journey to Thebes, 400 miles from Memphis.

Only once did Tutankhamen and Ankhesnamen leave their cabin and stand on the foredeck. This happened at the place where the desert cliffs, which had hugged the river, swept away in a gigantic semicircle and then returned. Within that semicircle were the remains of a city - with palaces, temples, and tombs - all completely deserted. The boatmen and the officials averted their eyes, for this was the accursed spot wherein had lived Ikhnaton, the Heretic King. For a short time, it had been the capital of Egypt, but now the palace rooms were empty, the gardens overgrown, and only bats inhabited the deserted temples. Yet Tutankhamen dared to look at it. Who could stop him, since he was now pharaoh? The heretic had been the pharaoh's uncle and Ankhesnamen's father; both she and her husband had played in those gardens when they were young children.

Even so, why should the king have wanted to look at the accursed city? Had not Ikhnaton deserted Thebes, his ancestral capital, and for nearly thirty years reigned from this unhallowed place? He had driven out Amen-Re, the god of his father, and worshiped a new, strange being called the *Aten,* a god without even a face! It was simply a disk with arms, representing the sun. The king had not allowed any other god to be worshiped, not even the good Osiris, god of the dead, and holy Isis, his wife, and Horus, the staunch son who slew Set. "There is only one god," he had said. Only one god - in Egypt, where everyone knew there were hundreds. Clearly, Ikhnaton had been mad.

Harmhab was annoyed. Soneb could see that, without having Pewero nudge him to point it out. The army commander went to the king, spoke a few words to him in a low whisper, and seemed to be reproving him. Tutankhamen

shrugged his shoulders and then went slowly back to his cabin, frowning. Ankhesnamen did not even acknowledge Harmhab's presence, but remained standing, her straight, slim figure looking even more regal than ever. Finally she, too, followed the king back to the cabin. Tutankhamen suggested another game, but she was not interested. For a long time, the girl-queen sat, staring out across the water, absorbed in her own sad thoughts.

7

THE GIRL QUEEN

As the royal ship glided toward its next anchorage, Ankhesnamen was thinking about her past and her future. Six years ago, she had been a ten-year-old child running around the women's quarters in the Palace of Ikhnaton. She had had many playmates, because in an Egyptian royal household, a child was brought up not only among her own blood brothers and sisters but among her numerous half-sisters, cousins, and other relatives. They played games; the small girls had dolls and the boys mechanical toys, including an animal on wheels which nodded its head when you pulled it along; when they were older they played with gaming boards (like modern chess or checkers), and the boys practiced archery with small bows and arrows.

But all the time they were conscious that they were *royal* children, different from the children of the slaves and servants who attended them, and the peasants whom they saw working in the fields when the king took them for a ride in his chariot. Ankhesnamen had loved those rides. Since she was Ikhnaton's daughter, her name, at first, had been Ankhespaten; the name of her father's god - the *Aten* - had been incorporated into her own. It was only later that the priests of Amen had made her change it to Ankhesn*amen*.

She also remembered her mother, the beautiful queen Nefertiti, Ikhnaton's chief wife. Nefertiti's name in ancient Egyptian means "the beautiful woman has come," and Ankhesnamen had inherited much of her mother's beauty. Sometimes the king would take Nefertiti and several of their daughters for a chariot ride through the city which he had founded. The people, thousands of them, would come out onto the streets to cheer them. The pharaoh and his wife laughed and smiled, and the children (all girls, for Ikhnaton had had no son) shrieked and giggled as they clung to the chariot rails, and Ankhesnamen's sister Beketaten, always the mischievous one, would try to poke the rumps of the galloping horses with a stick. It was all great fun, and highly unconventional, because in the sculptures of the old kings (which Ankhesnamen had seen), the king was never shown like that - enjoying a drive with his children - but always looking solemn and majestic, like a god. It had never occurred to her that this was wrong until the priests of Amen told her so. How shocked they were, those dull, dreary old men, when they saw a statue of Ikhnaton actually dandling one of his children on his knee. And on another, the sculptor had shown the chariot ride, with Beketaten trying to poke the horses with her stick!

The priests, she knew, had ordered nearly all these portraits of her father destroyed. She hoped that they hadn't found all of them, though they had even broken into the tombs to obliterate the memory of the hated Heretic. (Fortunately, the picture described here can still be seen in the tombs of Tell el-Amarna.) Why had they wanted to destroy them? Because, these old men said, it was sacrilegious to depict the pharaoh as a human being, enjoying human pleasures, since he was the son of god. But why was it wrong? Was not her

father the son of the living Aten?

These are the thoughts which raced through Ankhesnamen's head as the oars moved to a slower rhythm and the ship slid quietly toward yet another landing stage.

Ankhesnamen had known Tutankhamen when they were very young, only then, he had been called Tutankhaten. He had been a thoughtful boy, quiet and reserved, though he had a fierce temper if he was teased too much. Her sisters often tormented him, but Ankhesnamen had learned it was unwise to go too far. He might seem frail, but his will was strong. She began to respect him. So she was glad when the news was brought to her that she was to marry her former playmate. Her bridegroom might easily have been someone she liked much less.

From an early age, Ankhesnamen had known that since she was heiress of the throne, she would have to marry someone of the royal house. Though the royal princesses were not taught reading and writing - why should they be, when there were slaves and servants to do this for them? - they were taught many more important things. The pharaoh might be ruler of the South and North and the son of Re, but, in fact, he could only become pharaoh by marrying the daughter of the previous king. Inheritance of the throne of Egypt always passed through the female line, never through the male. Men might glory in their power, but it was through women that they received that power. So the daughters of Egypt could hold their heads high.

But this ancient custom also had its disadvantages, as Nefertiti had sometimes pointed out. If the pharaoh died, or was killed, what happened to his widow? The right of succession to the throne could only pass through her. This gave her power, but also made her vulnerable; because though in theory she could choose her own husband, in practice she was often overruled. Whoever married her would become pharaoh, and there were many ambitious men who coveted this honor.

Ankhesnamen looked at her husband, the delicate Tutankhamen, who was physically frail like her father. Then she looked at the stalwart Harmhab, as he stood upright, waiting to step ashore when the ship berthed. Soon he began issuing orders in his harsh, arrogant voice. She shuddered and drew her cloak around her slender shoulders.

8

THE RICHEST CITY IN THE WORLD

The journey was nearly over; the flotilla was approaching imperial Thebes (though in Soneb's day, it had not yet acquired this Greek name, but was called No-Amen). For the last fifty miles, the river had become much more crowded with shipping. There were craft of all kinds, from small, fast skiffs which darted in and out among the reed marshes - with noblemen and their wives enjoying an afternoon's fowling - to big slow-moving boats laden with sacks of wheat, jars of oil, or wine in earthenware vessels with large looped handles and pointed bases. Sometimes Soneb saw huge flat-bottomed barges which might be carrying a colossal granite obelisk weighing some 200 tons or a load of building stone or the gigantic figure of a god carved in stone. All heavy loads were transported by river, for the roads were poor, only capable of carrying light traffic.

Here came a Syrian (meaning all the lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean, including Lebanon, Israel, and modern Syria) ship from Gebal now Jubai), probably taking back a load of papyrus, the writing material made from the reeds that grew so abundantly on the Nile banks. Since the city had practically a monopoly on the papyrus trade, and one of its names was Byblos, the Greeks used the word *biblos* to mean "papyrus hark." Ancient books were made from this material, and *biblos* came to mean "book." It is from this same word that the English word *Bible* comes.

Here came another ship laden with cedar wood from Lebanon, and over there, moving swiftly downstream, was a vessel from the Mediterranean island of Crete. Her mariners were unlike the Egyptians; slim-waisted and broad-shouldered, they wore their dark hair in an individual style, usually with one dark, curling lock falling over the left shoulder.

The Egyptians respected these Cretan sailors, the Keftiu, because in their well-built craft, they were able to cross the great ocean from remote, mysterious islands not many Egyptians had ever seen. Few Egyptian boats ventured out of the Nile's mouth, and if they did, it was only to hug the coast of Palestine. An ocean crossing was beyond their power; they were mainly fresh-water sailors. Not so the Keftiu, who sailed regularly to Thebes, bringing with them the beautiful works of their craftsmen: vases and goblets and drinking vessels of gold, silver, and inlaid bronze; ornaments, jewelry, and fine weapons which they traded for the produce of Egypt, such as linen and faience.

Five hundred years earlier, in the time of the Middle Kingdom, such visitors were unknown. There was little trade outside the borders of Egypt, though Amenemhet had invaded Syria. But now, Thebes was the capital of Egypt and the home of her chief god. It was the center of a great empire, an international mart to which the traders and merchants of the world sent their goods by land, sea, and river. It had contacts via the Nile and the Mediterranean. Land routes ran northeastward across the Sinai Peninsula to the far-off countries of Syria

and Mesopotamia. Other routes crossed the eastern desert to the east coast of Africa to Punt, "the land of perfumes" (Somalia).

To Thebes came copper ore mined in Sinai and timber from the Lebanese mountains. And south of the cataracts lay Nubia, whose black people brought to Thebes their tribute: ivory; ebony; exotic animals, such as giraffes and monkeys; and especially gold. No country in the ancient world amassed so much of this precious metal as Egypt. In Ikhnaton's time, a foreign king could write to the pharaoh: "Please send me gold; for in thy country gold is dust." Egypt did not produce this gold. Most of it came from the mines of Nubia, but some from the plunder of foreign cities.

This was Soneb's city, the richest in the world, and Soneb was proud to be a Theban. Everyone on the boat - except the king and queen - crowded forward to catch a first sight of it as the royal flotilla rounded a bend in the river. And there it was: great, many-columned temples of warm pink stone soaring into the blue sky; long, low flat-roofed palaces with porticoes and balconies set among flower gardens; shops, warehouses, taverns, and wharves crowded with shipping. A cheer went up from the boats and was answered from the banks on which swarms of screaming, naked children ran. Even the weary rowers quickened their strokes, knowing that soon they would be able to rest. Only the pharaoh seemed to take little interest, thinking only of yet another long, formal reception and elaborate ceremony of welcome which he had to endure. Ankhesnamen glanced at him anxiously; he looked not only tired, but ill.

Pewero and Soneb had to endure the ceremony too. The impatient young soldier yawned at the sight of the rows of prostrate, shaven-headed priests waiting on the quayside. But he glanced with some interest at a group of slim young girls who stood nearby. They were the priestesses of Amen, all daughters of rich and important families. Like members of a well-drilled chorus, each with one accord raised the sistrum - a kind of rattle - held in her right hand and shook it. The sistrums gave out a tinkling, metallic sound; and the voices of the girls rose in a shrill, nasal treble, chorusing a chant of welcome to the pharaoh and a hymn of praise to the great god whose son he was. The deep-voiced priests set up an answering chant, punctuated by the rhythmic tapping of light drums and the shrilling of pipes.

At long last, the wearisome ritual was over. The king and queen were borne away in their gold-embellished carrying chairs through the kneeling crowds, who pressed their foreheads in the dust as the royal procession passed. Soneb mounted his own carrying chair and was transported by his personal servants to his father's spacious villa on the outskirts of Thebes. When he arrived at the gate, the Nubian porter helped him alight from his chair while other servants carried in his luggage.

The exterior of the house in which Soneb lived was almost featureless, merely a

high, mud-brick wall covered with whitewashed plaster, above which rose the trees of the garden beyond. There was only one gate to the large formal garden surrounded by trees, with a rectangular ornamental pond in the center. There was a formal pattern of intersecting paths, bordered by rare flowers brought from Asia. Most of the trees also came from Asia, for apart from the palm and the dwarf sycamore, there are few timber trees in Egypt.

As Soneb's house was a large one, there were three passages leading from the porter's lodge. One led directly to the best rooms in the house; the second led to the women's quarters and adjoining nurseries; and the third went to the servants' quarters, with its dining hall, kitchen, and storerooms. Crossing the garden, Soneb entered the main corridor which led to a series of columned halls used for parties and receptions, and smaller rooms for dining and sleeping. Furniture was sparse by modern standards, but this gave a pleasing effect of space and dignity. Apart from inlaid chests for clothes, there were low couches with cushions, beautifully designed chairs (the legs and arms often ornamented with animal heads in gold), tables for dining, and in the bedrooms were elaborately carved beds with mattresses of plaited cords.

Everything was designed for coolness. There were no glazed windows; they would be unnecessary and would attract too much heat. Small grilles set high in the walls admitted all the light needed, and the house was designed so that the rooms opened inward onto cool courtyards. The walls were of mud bricks, but these were covered with a coating of fine white plaster adorned with gaily colored frescoes of birds, plants, fish, and animals. There were many flowers in the rooms, for the Egyptians loved flowers: papyrus plants in tall jars and lotuses floating in bowls.

There were also ablution chambers with baths which were filled and emptied by servants. For sanitation, there were earth privies in small rooms, and the refuse was led to cesspits which were regularly cleared. But there were hardly any drains because rainfall was so scanty in Egypt and water so precious that drains were not considered necessary.

Soneb's father and mother welcomed him in one of the columned halls of reception. His father, Senmut, looked dignified in his stiff white kilt, with gold sandals on his feet and his arms and chest glittering with gold and jeweled ornaments, some of which betokened his high rank. His mother, Meryt, was still in her middle thirties - a graceful, elegant figure in her long, close-fitting gown of goffered linen.

Soneb's parents were delighted to see him, and they asked many questions about his journey - about whom he had met, about the places he had visited, about the king and queen. His father, in particular, pestered him with questions about the governor of this or that nome, whom he had known when he was a young man, and seemed annoyed when Soneb had to admit that he did not

always remember. Soneb talked about the hunting trip at Memphis, and how annoyed Harmhab had been when the king and queen insisted on looking at the city of Ikhnaton. Soneb's mother showed some sympathy, but his father frowned and changed the subject.

That night, Soneb's parents held a party in the largest reception room. As darkness fell, the whole scene was transformed into a kind of fairyland. Ranks of torchbearers stood along the garden wall to light the distinguished guests from their carrying chairs to the hall of reception. Lights glittered in the waters of the pool, and on each side of the great doors stood attendants, as rigid as statues, who carried their wands of office. In an alcove at one end of the room, a small band played. Their harps, lutes, flutes, and drums set up a pleasant rhythmic background to the chatter of the guests as they sat beside low tables. Servant girls presented them with huge lotus flowers and poured wine from tall jars into goblets. The tables were spread with delicacies: fish, fowl, and roast meat; fruit and cakes. The wine waiters were kept busy, for the Egyptians were fond of drinking, and soon the noise of chatter almost drowned the music.

Since this was a special occasion, some of Soneb's younger brothers and sisters had been allowed to attend the party. There was his brother Ramose, who was studying to become a doctor, and Intef, who was still at the College of Scribes. They sat with Soneb among the male guests. The women were in a separate group, and among them was Soneb's fifteen-year-old sister Tiy, unaccustomed to all this splendor and noisy revelry and looking eagerly about her. Sometimes she caught the eyes of her parents, who sat on a slightly raised dais, smiling down on their guests. When this happened, Senmut gave his daughter a little nod of encouragement.

Suddenly there was a clash of cymbals, the orchestra struck up a strident, strongly rhythmic dance tune, and from a dark recess at the back of the room, a young dancer glided forward into the lighted hall. She bowed low before Senmut and Meryt, her long black hair sweeping the floor. The guests clapped and shouted, for this was Mutardis, a Nubian, and one of the finest dancers in Egypt.

The drums began to beat out a different rhythm, and Mutardis danced, at first with slow, sinuous movements, flinging back her head, stretching out her brown arms on which scores of bracelets jangled. Then she began to sing, and the guests ceased chattering and listened to the words.

"Sweet of love is the daughter of the King! Black are her tresses as the blackness of the night, Black as the wine grapes are the clusters of her hair, The hearts of the women turn towards her with delight, Gazing on her beauty, with which none can compare."

Little Tiy watched, entranced. She, like most of the daughters of good families,

had learned to dance and sing the old songs of her country. But she knew she would never be able to perform like this professional dancer.

So the party went on, far into the night, until the torches burned low and some of the guests, drowsy with wine and good food, began to nod a little. Their mood changed; they become a little sadder and more reflective, thinking - as the ancient Egyptians often thought - of the shortness of human life and the millions who had gone the way to death and who now lay silent in the tombs beyond the far bank of the river. Where were they now, those silent ones who once had reveled and drunk deep?

Another singer appeared, and there was a hush as he tuned his harp and prepared to sing one of the oldest and saddest of Egyptian songs. There was old Khaem wese, the blind harper. He was held in great respect in Thebes and was always an honored guest. And this was the last song.

> Bodies pass away, the others remain, since the time of them that went before.
>
> The gods that were aforetime rest in their pyramids, and likewise the noble and the great, buried in their pyramids.
>
> They that built houses, their habitations are no more.
>
> What hath been done with them?
>
> I have heard the discourses of Imhotep and Hardedef with whose words men speak everywhere.
>
> Where are their habitations now?
>
> Their walls are destroyed, their habitations are no more, as if they had never been.
>
> None cometh from thence that he may tell us how they fare, that he may tell us what they need, that he may set our heart at rest, until we also go to the place whither they are gone.

9

BE A SCRIBE!

The next day, Intef, Soneb's fourteen-year-old brother, was a worried boy. He went to the College of Scribes, which was part of the great Temple of Amen-Re at Karnak, and every day, under the stern supervision of his teacher, he studied the language and literature, laws and customs, of his country. He had graduated from the junior school some time ago and wrote the language fairly well. But it was also necessary for any educated young Theban to be familiar with the literature of Egypt. He had to know the Egyptian "classics" - stories, poems, philosophical and religious literature, which had been written down by great scribes who had died hundreds of years ago. Egypt was rich in such writings, which were preserved on papyrus scrolls in the temple archives. Generations of young Egyptians - including Soneb - had had to learn them and had gone in fear of their teachers, who did not hesitate to beat any pupils whom they considered stupid or lazy.

Intef's problem was that he had a poor oral memory, and if he was instructed to memorize a poem or story and then recite it to his class, he was likely to "freeze." Because of the excitement of Soneb's arrival and the subsequent party which he had been allowed to attend, Intef had not done his homework. Now, with school only a couple of hours away, he was acutely aware that he had not properly learned a certain didactic work called *Exhortation to a Scribe.*

This work is an amusing, satirical piece of writing, though its humor was lost on Intef. Soneb remembered that he had not thought it funny either when he had been made to learn it at the same age. So, sitting on the porch with the scroll in his hand, he began taking Intef through his lines, prompting him when he forgot. The first words aroused unhappy memories.

> I place thee at school along with the children of notables, to educate thee and to have thee trained in this aggrandising calling.
>
> Behold, I relate to thee how it fares with the scribe when he (arrives at school). Wake up, at thy place; the books lie already before thy comrades. Place thine hand on thy clothes and look to thy sandals. When thou gettest thy daily task . . . be not idle. . . .

Naturally, the work was commonplace to Soneb, the son of an Egyptian "notable" of the Eighteenth Dynasty. But to us, looking back over a period of 3,000 years, it has a special significance. It demonstrates clearly the importance the Egyptians placed on the art of reading and writing. To become a scribe was the first rung on the ladder of success. Without it, there was no hope of being more than a craftsman, a peasant, a farmer, or a soldier. But once acquired, it could lead, with luck as well as talented, to the highest offices of state.

Intef stumbled on while Soneb corrected his mistakes:

> I am told that thou forsakest writing, thou givest thyself up to pleasures; thou goest from street to street, where it smelleth of beer, to destruction. Beer, it scareth men from thee, it sendeth thy soul to perdition.

"Remember that, Intef," Soneb said warningly. "I saw you drink at least three cups last night. Go on! The next line is: Thou art like a broken steering-oar in a ship . . ."

"I know that part," said Intef. "Give me the part about the soldier."

Soneb looked farther down the closely written scroll. "This?" he asked, and began reading. "Ah, what meanest thou by saying . . ."

"That's it," replied his brother, and rapidly reeled off the next few lines.

> Ah, what meanest thou by saying "It is thought that the soldier is better off than the scribe'?"
>
> Come, let me tell thee how the soldier fares, the oft belaboured, when he is brought while yet a child, to be shut up in the . . . in the . . .

"Barracks," Soneb prompted.

> In the barracks. He receiveth a burning blow on his body, a ruinous blow on his eye, a blow layeth him out on his eyebrows; and his pate is cleft with a wound.

Pewero should be reading this, Soneb reflected. But Intef rattled on . . .

> He is laid down and beaten, like a document. He is battered and bruised with flogging.

Intef paused, and looked to Soneb for a prompt.

"Come let me tell thee . . ." said Soneb.

> Come, let me tell thee how he goeth to Syria, and how he marcheth to the mountains. His bread and water are borne upon his shoulder like the load of an ass; they make his neck as . . . that of an ass, and the joints of his back are bowed. . . When he reacheth the enemy, he is a trapped bird, there is no strength in his limbs.

And so on down to the triumphant lines:

> O scribe Enenna, turn away from the thought that the soldier is better off than the scribe . . . Set thy heart on being a scribe, that thou mayest direct the whole earth . . .

The next lines amused Soneb, for they reminded him of Pewero and his pride in

the new chariot which his parents had just bought for him.

> Come, let me tell thee of a miserable calling, that of the officer of chariotry. He is placed in the stable because of the father of his mother (i.e., out of regard for his good family) with five slaves; two men of them are given him as helpers. He hasteneth to get steeds from the stall in His Majesty's presence. When he hath obtained goodly horses, he is glad and exalteth. He cometh with them to his town, and he trampleth it underfoot with zest. Happy is he when he thus trampleth underfoot . . .

Just like Pewero, Soneb reflected, smiling as Intef recited the next lines, which tell what happens when the green young officer acquires his beautiful chariot and rides in it to the land of the Mountain Dwellers.

> He expanded his wealth which he hath from the father of his mother, that he may acquire a chariot. Its pole costeth three deben, and the chariot costs five deben. He hasteneth to trample underfoot from upon it. He maketh himself into one that is shod . . . he taketh himself and thrusts himself into the sandals (i.e., he goes on foot). He casteth the chariot away in the thicket, and his feet are cut by the sandals, and his shirt is pierced with thorns.
>
> When One (the commander) comes to muster the troops, he is grievously beaten . . . with a hundred stripes.

And once again came the inevitable smug refrain:

> Be a scribe, who is freed from forced labour, and protected from work.

Self-satisfied old dolt, Soneb thought, becoming a little bored by the writer. But Intef was imploring him to go on with a later passage, in which the scribe describes the unhappy lot of the farmer.

> Dost thou not bethink thee how it fares with the farmer, when the harvest is registered? (i.e. taxed.) The worm hath taken half the corn, the hippopotamus hath devoured the rest. The mice abound in the field, and the locust hath descended. The cattle devour, and the sparrows steal. Woe to the farmer!
>
> And now the scribe landeth on the embankment, and will register the harvest. The porters carry sticks, and the Negroes palm-ribs. They say "Give corn."
>
> You say, "There is none."
>
> He (the farmer) is stretched out and beaten; he is bound and thrown into the canal. . . . His wife is bound in his presence, his children are put in

> fetters . . . But the scribe, he directeth the work of all people. For him there are no taxes, for he pays tribute by writing, and there are no dues for him. Prithee, know that.

"Now give me the part about the baker," said Intef. "It starts, 'When the baker standeth and baketh bread. . . .'"

But Soneb had had enough, and tossed the scroll back to his brother with a curt "Sorry, I'm busy. You'll have to manage by yourself." And he walked away, thinking that perhaps Pewero the rebel was right, after all. Perhaps there *were* too many civil servants in Egypt.

10

THE WORKSHOPS OF AMEN-RE

Later that day, Soneb was riding in Pewero's new chariot through the streets of Thebes. He wished that he, and not Pewero, were driving. The wheels bounced over the ruts, the whip cracked, and the horses sent up clouds of thick brown dust as they galloped through the narrow, crowded lanes, scattering men, women, children, and beasts. Not that Soneb was worried by traffic regulations, for there were none. Nor was he concerned about the people flying helter-skelter from the plunging hoofs. As a Theban aristocrat related to the pharaoh, such thoughts never occurred to him. But he was a little worried about his own survival.

Suddenly the frail vehicle lurched to a halt, almost pitching him over the rail. Recovering his balance, Soneb saw ahead of them a column of soldiers marching smartly in step, spears held upright in their right hand, shields in their left. Behind them came chariots carrying officers, and behind the officers a procession of high officials in carrying chairs, among whom Soneb recognized Harmhab, and another, older man who was well known and feared throughout Thebes. This official's name was Ay. He had held high office under Ikhnaton, the Heretic, but when the court returned to Thebes, he had swiftly changed his allegiance to the older god, Amen-Re. Under the young king Smenkhare, who had succeeded Ikhnaton, Ay had risen to even higher office; and when Smenkhare died and Tutankhamen ascended the throne, Ay had increased his power even more. Since both pharaohs were little more than children, it had not been difficult. Pewero, who knew all the court gossip, reported that Ay and Harmhab hated each other.

Such a procession was unusual, since it was not a day of religious festival. It was going toward the pharaoh's palace. Why? Something important was probably happening for the two rivals, Harmhab and Ay, to be going together in solemn procession to the royal palace. No doubt Soneb would hear the reason soon. Meanwhile, he was relieved that the crowded streets forced Pewero to drive at a more sober pace.

Pewero had called for Soneb that morning to take him to the Karnak Temple, where Senmut had recently been appointed superintendent of the Workshops of Amen-Re. He was proud of his new appointment and was anxious that Soneb, his eldest son, should share his pleasure. Naturally, Soneb obeyed his wish, though with some irritation, since it deprived him of an afternoon's hunting with Pewero, which he had promised himself. Still, there would be other days.

The crawling pace of the chariot gave Soneb time to look around. How different Thebes looked from beyond the walls of his father's villa. Here there were no longer fine houses enclosed by gardens and high walls, but only narrow, malodorous streets, wandering haphazardly through a maze of mud hovels. Naked children stood beside the road, staring at them. Here were mothers with children at the breast; scraggy children with huge eyes, around which flies

clustered, quite unlike the well-fed infants among whom Soneb had played as a child. Sometimes the chariot had to stop. Soneb glanced through an open doorway and saw a smith at his forge; through another he could see sailors drinking in a beerhouse, roaring out their drunken songs. One staggered out into the road and shouted an insult. Pewero sent his whip curling around the man's naked shoulders, and he rolled in the dust, screaming in pain.

The chariot moved on slowly, and at every turn of the narrow, twisting road, Soneb saw some new scene. Here, in a narrow courtyard, women were brewing beer. There, crouched over his oven, a baker was making bread. From one house came the grunt of a carpenter's saw; from another the clang of hammers on metal; in a third, he saw men crouched over low benches, fashioning delicate jewelry such as his mother and sisters wore. But these were only glimpses. His main impressions were of stench and filth and noise: children screaming, mothers scolding, men arguing. And everywhere, there were beggars - men, women, and children - endlessly repeating the same pathetic, moaning cries, and holding out thin hands. This was Thebes, too, but not the Thebes which Soneb normally saw. These, too, were Egyptians, but though they were of the same blood and race as Soneb, he did not look on them as people like his fellow nobles. He felt this way not because he was inhuman, but because he, like his father and his father's father before him, lived in a completely different world. He was an educated man, a scribe. He knew the secret of the writings; these people did not.

The workers he glimpsed from Pewero's chariot - the smiths, carpenters, jewelers, metalworkers - were individual craftsmen. But already, in 1350 BCE, such men were also organized in what we would call *factories,* under supervision. To such a workshop, Soneb was going now, the temple workshop of Amen-Re. A workshop in a religious place may seem strange, but not to Soneb, an Egyptian of the eighteenth dynasty. For the temple of the King of Gods was not static like a modern cathedral. It was constantly being improved and extended, new halls added and old ones pulled down. Every pharaoh honored the god by striving to add to the beauty of Karnak.

There were also other gods to be glorified, such as Khonsu and Mut, who had their own temples, each with its forecourt and columned hall leading to the holy of holies, a dark inner chamber which could be entered only by the chief priests, for this was the home of the deity. Within it stood his or her statue of gold enriched with semi-precious stones. The religious ceremonies consisted, basically, of attending to the god's needs, which were like those of a human being, that is, he had to be clothed in appropriate garments, washed (lustration), and fed (sacrifice). However strange such concepts may seem to now, nevertheless, that is how the people of ancient Egypt honored their principal gods.

They saw them as kings and queens, who, like earthly monarchs, needed magnificent houses, servants (the priests), splendid furniture, and all the other equipment of wealth and power. So there were enormous treasuries for storing this wealth, schools for training the priests and scribes, who kept records of the gods' property and levied and collected taxes as well as performing religious offices. Whatever career one chose to follow - priest, doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect, or officer of state - one's training began in one of the priestly colleges attached to the temple of the King of Gods.

Now Soneb and Pewero were approaching Karnak along a great road bordered with sculptured figures. Ahead of them an enormous pylon, or gateway, broke the line of the great enclosing wall, and in front of that gateway stood tall flag posts of cedar. The guards saluted and the chariot passed under the high doorway into the courtyard beyond. Here, colossal statues of former kings looked down on throngs of men who seemed like Pygmies by comparison.

On one side stood the main temple of Amen-Re; on another, half-hidden behind huge mounds of rubble and sand, rose the unfinished columns and walls of a new temple building. Gangs of men, under foremen, were dragging blocks of stone up these rubble ramps and sliding them into position, the same method which the pyramid builders had used over 1,400 years before. Here, another squad of laborers was hauling a granite obelisk which had been quarried at Aswan near the Nubian border and then floated down on a barge to the docks at Thebes. It was going to the workshops for polishing and to receive its carved inscription.

Inside the dark, many-columned temple, there was quiet, but outside in the hot sunshine only an endless babel of noise: shouting foremen, chanting workmen, mixed with the ring of chisels and the grinding roar of the sledges carrying huge blocks of carved stone. A modern man or woman might well ask: "What is the use of all this activity?" But an ancient Egyptian would never have thought of asking such a question. To him, it was right and natural that the chief duty of men was to honor the gods who guarded the life of Egypt and to serve the king, their representative on earth.

Leaving the chariot, which was taken away by temple servants, Soneb and Pewero walked through a maze of narrow streets, for the Karnak Temple was a city within a city, rather like the Vatican in Rome (but larger). Finally, they entered a long, low building from which came a continuous harsh clamor of sound. They could hear it fifty yards away, but when the doors swung open, the noise hit them like a shock wave - the banging of heavy hammers on metal, the shrieking of saws, the whirring of drills, the roar of furnaces, and the lighter tapping of hammers and chisels. Bars of sunlight poured down from grilles set high in the unplastered walls, and dust motes glittered in the slanting rays. There was a strong, peculiar smell made up of wood shavings, burning metal,

and sweat.

Soneb joined his father, who was surrounded by his attendants. He looked proud but slightly bewildered, for the fact was that he had no practical knowledge of the processes he was watching. The shop foreman, with many bows and gesticulations, was trying to explain them.

Here were men shaping and polishing beads of malachite, carnelian, and lapis lazuli. They bored the holes in the beads with a fine bronze drill, which was revolved by wrapping a bowstring round the shaft of the drill and drawing the bow rapidly backward and forward. At another bench, an old man was setting minute fragments of glass into an elaborate inlay for a gold pendant. The stones which lay near the workmen's hands came from many parts of Asia: crystal and chalcedony from the Eastern Desert, turquoise from Sinai, lapis lazuli from Western Asia.

Soneb moved on. In the next department, workmen were boring out stone vases with a heavy stone drill worked by a crank at the top and weighted to help the drill to bite. The drills were of copper, which wears quickly, so there was considerable wastage of metal. At this time, the Egyptians had not yet learned to make hard-metal tools.

Next came the carpenter's shop. Here were two workmen sawing logs into planks; the saw, Soneb noticed, cut on the pulling, not the pushing, stroke. In the room of the cabinetmakers was far less noise and a not-unpleasant smell of seasoned wood and glue. The cabinetmakers' tools were very like those used today; there were chisels of copper (iron had not been discovered yet), mallets, awls, straightedges, axes, adzes, and saws. The only difference a modern cabinetmaker would notice is that the hammer had no handle.

Soneb stopped to look at a casket that was being restored. On the lid was a picture of Tutankhamen and Ankhesnamen standing in a little pavilion festooned with flowers and grapes. The king is receiving bouquets of flowers from the young queen, who wears an open pleated robe of white linen which flows to her ankles. Below the royal couple, two court maidens are gathering flowers. The whole design was executed in ivory, inlaid with tiny pieces of ebony, faience, and glass. As the craftsman turned it in his hands, it glowed and glittered in the sunlight.

Nearby was a bow case of triangular shape, decorated back and front with a central panel of embossed gold, flanked with panels worked in a veneer of various colored barks and green-tinted leather. In the central panel is a hunting scene, showing the king in his chariot accompanied by hounds. On the side panels are animals, smitten by the king's arrows: oryx, hartebeest, ibex, gazelle, hyena, and a hare.

Soneb wandered on through room after room. In one workshop were rows of vases of semi-transparent alabaster; in another were statues of wood onto which the craftsmen were applying gold leaf. Some were life-size, others were miniatures, and all were beautifully fashioned, the product of generations of inherited and acquired skill in the handling of stone, wood, and precious metal.

Suddenly there was a stir at the far end of the workshop. An official carrying a staff hurried down the length of the room, accompanied by two attendants. He stopped in front of Soneb's father, prostrated himself three times, then handed him a message. Senmut read it with a grave face. Then he passed it back, and the official, after bowing again three times, retired. The workmen were watching as if they had sensed something unusual. Soneb opened his mouth to ask a question, but his father turned on his heel and walked out of the room.

Soneb and Pewero, who looked puzzled, followed him through the door at the far end and out onto a raised terrace.

They found Senmut standing with hands pressed together as if in prayer, looking out across the temple courtyards, across the sacred lake and the enclosing wall, across the gardens and villas of Thebes, toward a great white building which stood some distance away. It was the king's palace.

Suddenly, Soneb did not need to ask any question. Now he understood the reason for the procession that had interrupted Pewero's mad drive. Now he knew why Harmhab and Ay were going in state to the royal palace.

He became aware of a strange quiet. There was no more noise from the workshops, only a buzz of voices. But below him, in the courtyards, men were running, gathering in groups, talking. Somewhere, far off, a woman began to moan. Others joined the cry, and soon, from several quarters of Thebes, Soneb heard a sound which he had heard twice before. He had heard it when Ikhnaton died. He had heard it at the death of Smenkhare. It was a piercing, ululating, heartbreaking wail - the old, immemorial lament for the death of a pharaoh.

11

HOUSE OF ETERNITY

Afterward, Soneb heard about the king's death from his brother Ramose, who, as a medical student, had been privileged to be present when the chief physician, Kenamun, was attending Tutankhamen. For a considerable time, the pharaoh's increasing weakness had worried his doctors; in fact, Kenamun had advised him against making the trip to the Delta. But the king had insisted; he had had a powerful will in that frail body. None of his family had been strong. Ikhnaton had died at about the age of forty, and Smenkhare when he was still a boy. Generations of inbreeding had not only refined the royal stock but had also weakened it.

Tutankhamen had frequently complained of sweating and fever, and during the past year, his bronchial cough had become steadily worse. He had begun to cough blood, which the physicians knew to be an ominous sign. Ramose described to Soneb the scene in the sickroom as Kenamun strove to prolong the royal life. Ankhesnamen had hardly left the king's side, watching helplessly and often impatiently, while the chief physician applied the only remedies known to Egyptian medical science. These remedies would not be comprehensible today, because to the ancient Egyptians of this period, illness was believed to be caused by the presence of malevolent spirits within the body. The art of the physician consisted in driving out these spirits.

It was different if a man had received an injury from an external cause - if he was hurt in battle, for instance. Then the physician would clean and bandage a wound, or set a bone, just as any modern doctor would. Ramose, who revered Kenamun, had often told Soneb the story of how the chief physician saved the life of an officer who had suffered a severe head wound which had paralyzed one side of his body. Kenamun had first had the man drugged, and then, peeling back the flesh from the scalp, delicately removed a portion of the skull which was pressing on the brain, using a sharp copper saw and knives. Afterward, he had replaced the piece of bone, sewn up the scalp, and the man had recovered. He had not regained the full use of his paralyzed muscles, but his life had been saved.

Egyptian physicians had a sound knowledge of human anatomy, derived partly from the dissection of animals used for sacrifice and partly from the custom of mummifying the dead, a process during which the vital organs had to be removed from the body. These physicians knew the importance of the heart. One of their medical textbooks, which still survives, contains these words: "The beginning of the science of the physician; to know the movement of the heart; there are vessels attached to it for every movement of the body."

However, they did not perceive the circulation of the blood. They had only one word to denote muscles, arteries, and veins. The word used for blood vessels communicating with the heart was the same as that used for muscles. And they attached little importance to the brain, believing that the heart was the center

of the intelligence.

The ancient Egyptian physician's knowledge rested partly on experience, but also to a large extent on inherited lore. Some of this was derived from their primitive ancestors who had lived along the Nile Valley before 3000 BCE. Much of this lore would be considered nonsense today. The Egyptians used drugs which were made from vegetable substances such as acacia, anise, cassia, castor oil, cumin, poppy, and saffron, and mineral products such as alum, copper, feldspar, sulfur, and sodium bicarbonate. But accompanying these purely medical treatments, there were spells and incantations which, it was believed, would drive from the diseased body the evil spirits which were tormenting it. Sir Alan Gardiner, writing of the Egyptian magician's art, has defined two parts of his performance: the oral rite and the manual rite. The first was spoken, the second performed.

Ramose told Soneb that when Tutankhamen was dying, the chief physician recited spells over a clay image and then placed it, magically charged, over the king's body. Yet he was not a "quack," but a highly qualified physician, familiar with the therapeutic value of drugs which are still in use. From Egypt, as one scholar says, we have "the earliest medical books, the first observations in anatomy, the first experiments in surgery and pharmacy, the first use of splints, bandages, compresses and other appliances and the first anatomical and medical vocabulary. . . ." Then why did Egyptian doctors indulge in magic?

In our own day, science and religion are usually regarded as two independent facets of the same truth. In ancient Egypt, they were not independent, but inseparable. So Tutankhamen died, and the cause remains unknown. Most likely, he would have died anyway from a disease that would not yield even to the resources of modern medicine. He may have been poisoned - as some have suggested at the instigation of those who saw in his death a necessary step to power. Examination of the bones has given no certain clue, though tuberculosis has been suggested as a possible cause of death.

As a member of the funeral procession, Soneb was uncomfortable. Pebbles got between his thin sandals and the soles of his feet, and each step was an agony. The day was blisteringly hot, and the bare rocks of the Valley of the Kings flung back the heat. Priests chanted the same monotonous chorus over and over again.

"In peace, in peace, unto the Great God," they cried, and the cliffs echoed the rattle of the sistrums.

The procession wound through the narrow valley, in which not a leaf or a flower grew. All was arid, sun-scorched rock and sand. The sun glinted on the yellow gold of the coffin, on the gold of the canopic chest which contained the alabaster jars enshrining the vital organs of the king. Weary feet kicked up the

dirty brown sand as toiling bearers carried to the tomb the objects which the king would need in the afterlife. Everything was there: his furniture - beds, chairs, tables, alabaster lamps - even his bow case and gaming board, and the ivory-and-ebony chair he had used as a ten-year-old child. There was his writing palette, which he used when learning the art of the scribes; his weapons, including a gold-bladed dagger; the ostrich-feather fan which waved above him at court ceremonies; vases of gold and silver; even the model boat depicting the king and queen cruising up the Nile, with Ankhesnamen languidly playing with a fan; glittering diadems of gold and semiprecious stones, caskets of wood and ivory, chariots of wood encased in gold. The accumulated riches of the most powerful state in the world were being borne by weary bearers whose labors could not earn in a lifetime a fraction of the wealth they carried on their bowed shoulders. Yet all this richness and beauty was to be buried under the earth. The feet shuffled and stumbled, and the merciless sun burned naked backs.

"In peace, in peace, unto the Great God," cried the priests.

It was now more than three months since Soneb had first heard the news of the king's death. During that time, there had been the usual routine preparations for the burial, preparations that Soneb, as an Egyptian, took for granted, but which today seem strange, even horrible.

Originally, it had been intended to inter the royal body in a large tomb similar to those of his ancestors buried in the Valley of the Kings. But for some reason, this plan was abandoned. Instead, Tutankhamen was buried in a comparatively small sepulcher, hardly appropriate - some people thought - to a pharaoh. There were even rumors that the king was to be buried in a tomb originally intended for Ay, a mere nobleman. But few people dared repeat this, whatever their private opinions might have been.

After his death, the body of Tutankhamen was ferried across the Nile to the Theban necropolis, where lived the embalmers, the makers of funerary furniture, the tomb makers, and others who served the City of the Dead. As in the days of the pyramid builders, the ancient tradition that the west was the home of the dead still persisted. The east bank of the Nile was the home of the living. On the west, beyond the bank of the river, was a plain, ending in a sudden, dramatic line of limestone cliffs, honeycombed with tombs. Here also were massive temples, such as that of Queen Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III, facing eastward across the Nile, but still serving the dead monarchs whose tombs lay beyond the cliffs in a secret valley which few people were permitted to visit.

First, the body of the young king was sent to the embalmers, who spent most of their lives among corpses. Every man or woman of rank expected to be buried in the necropolis, and there was a large industry devoted entirely to

preparing bodies for the tombs. There was even a standard scale of charges for mummification, ranging from the most elaborate to the simplest. In the pharaoh's case, of course, the most elaborate and expensive method was used. First, the body was cut open and the vital organs - heart, lungs, liver, and intestines - removed. The brain was drawn out of the skull by forceps inserted through the nostrils. Then the body was soaked for 100 days in a bath of natron to preserve the flesh.

This process completed, the corpse went to the embalmers, all masters of their craft. Pads were inserted under the flesh of the cheeks to give the illusion of life. The lips, cheeks, and eyebrows were painted. The heart - the most important organ in the body, according to Egyptian belief - was replaced in the chest, and then the corpse, after being suitably adorned with rich ornaments, was carefully wrapped in linen bands.

Meanwhile other craftsmen had been making the triple coffins, the sarcophagus of yellow quartzite, and the nest of outer shrines of wood plated with gold. Though some of these were specially made for Tutankhamen, others may have been taken from stock in the funerary workshops. For example, there were a number of objects which had been made for Smenkhare. By slightly altering the inscriptions - that is, the royal name - these were easily adapted for the tomb of Tutankhamen. Even the four canopic jars containing the king's vital organs (each enclosed in miniature golden coffins) were probably originally intended for Smenkhare.

Pewero, a few paces ahead of Soneb in the column, turned round, wiped his brow, and grimaced. Soneb did not respond. He was looking over Pewero's head and those of the officials beyond him, to the litter carried on the shoulders of four slaves. A slight, bowed figure rested on that litter; it was Queen Ankhesnamen. There were gold bracelets on her slim brown arms, and a heavy gold diadem on the dark wig. Soneb couldn't see her face, but he knew from the set of the shoulders that her expression was proud and aloof, like a goddess's. But under the painted mask, the red lips, and the dark-shadowed eyes what was she feeling? Pain and emptiness? Probably. Deep, sullen anger? Probably. But no one knew, except Ankhesnamen, who was watching the sunlight flash from her husband's coffin as it rocked to and fro on the backs of the bearers. She did not turn round. But if she had, she would have seen two men, also carried on litters, a few paces behind her. One was Harmhab, commander of the army. The other was Ay, who would superintend the ceremonies accompanying Tutankhamen's burial. And already it was rumored in the markets of Thebes that Ay would be the next pharaoh.

"In peace, in peace, unto the Great God," cried the priests as the procession trudged on toward Tutankhamen's House of Eternity.

12

WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS

Many more pharaohs were to be buried in the Valley of the Kings and in other parts of Egypt before Egyptian civilization came to an end. After 1350 BCE, the approximate year of Tutankhamen's death, more than another 1,300 years rolled by before the last pharaoh sat on the throne of Egypt. Yet throughout that time, despite changes of dynasty and foreign conquest - first by the Nubians, later by the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans - the essential character of Egyptian civilization changed little. Nor did it end with a sudden catastrophe. Rather it gradually dwindled and died, like an old, old man who clings to life year after year while his strength gradually ebbs.

This book creates a sketch of Egyptian civilization near the end of one of its peak periods - the close of the eighteenth dynasty. There is space only to summarize what happened afterward and to draw attention to the facts on which the sketch was based.

When Howard Carter entered the tomb of Tutankhamen, 3,000 years after the funeral procession returned to Thebes, he found hundreds of objects, such as the gaming board. There were also the bow case and the little casket with the picture of Tutankhamen and Ankhesnamen in their garden pavilion. The delicate alabaster lamp, made in the form of a boat and showing Ankhesnamen playing with her fan, was found in the tomb, as well as the beautiful ostrich-feather fan.

In the antechamber were the king's chariots, not unlike the one in which Pewero took Soneb on that mad ride through Thebes. The royal beds, with their mattresses of plaited cords, were similar - though more luxurious - to those in the villa of Soneb's parents.

Leaning against one wall was a beautiful floral wreath, perhaps placed there by Ankhesnamen as a last tribute to her husband before she left him to the darkness and silence. The tiny bodies of her stillborn children were also buried there.

Among the more gorgeous objects was the royal throne of wood plated with gold. Set in the backrest, and picked out in carnelian and lapis lazuli, is an elaborate scene showing the young king seated on the throne while the queen, carrying a small cup of oil, gracefully anoints his shoulder. The tiny, delicate figures under their enormous headdresses, seem weighed down with the burden of royalty, a burden too great for their frail shoulders. And above the pair, the goldsmith has depicted not Amen, but Ikhnaton's god, Aten, a sun's disc with descending rays. Probably this throne formed part of the palace furniture, and it suggests that, though the royal couple had nominally returned to the older religion of Amen-Re, they probably retained a secret sympathy for the "one god" which Ankhesnamen's father had tried to substitute for the older deities.

There were curious features of the tomb which have prompted much speculation. It is much smaller than most of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, hardly bigger than a nobleman's tomb. It has even been suggested that the sepulcher was intended for Ay, but he appropriated the much larger tomb originally meant for Tutankhamen. So the nest of golden shrines enclosing the triple coffins was so huge that it practically filled the burial chamber, and Carter had difficulty dismantling it. Again, the fact that so many funerary objects were crammed into the small chambers, without regard to order, lends support to the view that this was a hurried burial. Earlier and later pharaohs were provided with large tombs consisting of a number of rock-cut rooms linked by elaborate passages. Not so Tutankhamen, which may be why his more modest sepulcher escaped the attention of later tomb robbers. Every other tomb in the Valley of the Kings had been robbed when Carter made his great find.

However, an attempt had been made to rob the tomb, probably not long after the king was buried. Carter found that the objects in the antechamber had been piled up haphazardly, giving the appearance of a junk room. Moreover, he found telltale signs of the robbers' presence; they had snapped off some of the gold struts from the throne and had opened certain of the caskets. On the floor, the archeologists found a piece of knotted cloth containing a few rings. Clearly, the thieves had wrapped up these small, portable things and then, in haste, had dropped them. Evidently, they had been interrupted in their work and had had to make a hurried escape. After that, the priests cleared up the chamber as best they could and again sealed the entrance. Carter found two sets of seals on the plaster covering the bricked-up entrance to the antechamber.

And what happened to Ankhesnamen? There is no written record of her reign or, indeed, that of Tutankhamen himself. But some years ago, archeologists working in Asia Minor, hundreds of miles from Egypt, came upon a curious set of letters sent to the king of the Hittites by an Egyptian queen.

The Hittites were a powerful warrior people who had made inroads into Syria and Palestine during the reign of Ikhnaton. Naturally, their records are in Hittite, their own language, so that in rendering Egyptian names they adapted them to their own tongue. In these letters, there is mention of an Egyptian king rendered in Hittite as *Pip-khurriu-re.* Now one of Tutankhamen's names was *Neb-kheperu-Re,* though it is true that other pharaohs also bore this name. However, the Hittite name of the Egyptian queen in question is *Dakhamun,* which somewhat resembles Ankhesnamen's name.

This unidentified Egyptian queen was anxious to find a husband and had written to Shubbiliuma, the king of the Hittites, asking if he would send one of his sons to Egypt so that he could marry her and become pharaoh. Here is a translation of one of these letters:

My husband is dead; I have no children; your sons are said to be grown up;

> if you give me one of your sons, he will be my husband; he will be a help; send him accordingly, and thereafter I will make him my husband. I send bridal gifts.

Obviously, an alliance between the Hittites and Egypt would have been greatly to the Hittites' advantage, but Shubbiliuma was cautious. He sent a letter of inquiry to the Egyptian queen, to which he received this reply:

> What is this you say, "She has deceived me"? . . . Now you say to me thus, "There is thy husband"; but he is dead; I have no son; so I have taken a servant . . . and to another country I have not written this matter; to you, however, I have written; your sons are said to be grown up; so give me one of your sons, and he shall be my husband and King of Egypt.

German archeologist Ernst Edel has identified this mysterious queen with Ankhesnamen. The dates fit, and there is little doubt that it was Tutankhamen's young widow who wrote so desperately to the Hittite king. She had reason to be desperate. By Egyptian custom, the right of accession to the throne rested with her, and whoever married her would become the pharaoh. But during the 100 days during which Tutankhamen's body lay in its natron bath, awaiting mummification and burial, the queen was allowed a breathing space. If she could find a foreign husband during that brief time, she could present Ay and the other ambitious suitors with a *fait accompli.* Hence her urgent appeal to the Hittite king.

She failed, however. We know that, in the end, Shubbiliuma did send one of his sons, but he never reached Egypt. Probably Ay's agents saw to that. An unfortunate "accident" occurred near the frontier, perhaps. All we know is that Ay married Ankhesnamen and so became the next king of Egypt. He was probably an old man, for he reigned only a few years. Then the eighteenth dynasty ended, and a new king ascended the throne, becoming the first pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty. He was Harmhab, "greatest of the great, mightiest of the mighty, great lord of the people, king's messenger at the head of his army to the South and the North," as an inscription proudly tells us. Harmhab, who came from an old family of nomarchs (a *nomarch* is a governor of a nome) and who had served under three pharaohs, now achieved his ambition. He became pharaoh himself, having married the Princess Mutnezmet, sister of Nefertiti. What happened to Ankhesnamen we do not know, and her tomb has never been found.

Under Harmhab and his successors - including Ramses I, Seti I, Ramses II, and Merneptah - Egypt rose to new heights of imperial greatness. The former colonies which had been lost by Ikhnaton and his successors were won back from the Asians. And under such kings as Seti and Ramses II, Egypt again pursued its enemies beyond the Euphrates, as the great Thutmose III had done. Those were great days for Pewero and other adventurous youths like

him. The enormous sculptured reliefs on the temple walls of Karnak and elsewhere glorify Egyptian victories.

The twentieth dynasty (1200-1090 BCE) was distinguished by a group of kings who nearly all bore the name Ramses: The first, Ramses III, was also a great conqueror, but of his successors from Ramses IV to Ramses XII, few achieved much. One of these kings, Ramses VI, had his great tomb cut out of the hillside immediately above the entrance to the now-forgotten tomb of Tutankhamen. The stone chippings excavated by the workmen covered the entrance to the boy-king's sepulcher, sealing it off for posterity. Tutankhamen slept on, undisturbed, during the time when the tombs of his predecessors and successors were plundered one by one - until a time when Persian, Greek, and Roman tourists wandered through the deserted corridors with torches, examining the wall paintings. But the wealth of those kings had long since disappeared; the golden furniture, the fine coffins, the ornaments, and jewelry, had been melted down. But underneath the feet of the visitors, unknown and forgotten, lay the treasure of the fragile boy-king who had reigned for only a few short years and whose very existence was commemorated only by a name in the temple records.

During the twenty-first dynasty (1090-945 BCE) the priests of Amen became powerful enough to assume the title of pharaoh. But they were weak kings, and for a time, the kingdom was divided as it had been in former times. It was during this period that many of the earlier royal tombs were robbed, as we know from recorded trials of tomb robbers.

Other dynasties succeeded. One of these, the Twenty-second (945-745 BCE), includes the Sheshonk, a name which provides a link with Bible history. For this pharaoh was "Shishak king of Egypt," who fought several campaigns in Palestine. One of his predecessors married his daughter to King Solomon.

> And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David . . .

Later, when Solomon quarreled with Jeroboam, the "mighty man of valour," the latter sought the protection of the Pharaoh.

> And Jeroboam arose, arid fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Later in the Book of Kings, we read:

> And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

Though Shishak is mentioned in the Bible, he was, in fact, a minor pharaoh who lived at a time when the power of Egypt was only a shadow of what it had been in former times when the pharaohs had warred against such mighty peoples as the Hittites and the Mitanni. In those days, the petty kings of Judah had not warranted a mention in the Egyptian temple records. For Israel and Judah were tiny buffer states standing astride the strategic roads linking Egypt with the lands of its mighty enemies.

A time came when these enemies overcame Egypt. There were the Assyrians, under King Sennacherib, who in the seventh century BCE went through Syria and Palestine, marched up the Nile, and sacked Thebes.

This was the time when, as it says in the Bible, the Jewish king allied himself with the pharaoh in the hope of saving his country, and the emissary of Sennacherib taunted the Jews for relying on the pharaoh, "this bruised reed . . . on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it. . ." a clear indication of how low Egypt had sunk since its days of imperial greatness. Yet, on this occasion, the occupation was quite short, and there was still a pharaoh on the throne. Then, in the sixth century BCE, came the Persian invasion and occupation, which was followed about 200 years later by the Macedonians under Alexander the Great.

Alexander founded a new dynasty of Greek-speaking kings - the Ptolemies. Cleopatra, whom we always imagine as pure Egyptian, was actually a Ptolemy and had more Greek than Egyptian blood in her veins. Nevertheless, such was the tenacity and strength of the old Nile Valley culture, that even when the Romans added Egypt to their dominions, they found the old gods were still being worshiped, the old rituals performed, and the old language spoken and written. After more than 3,000 years the oldest and longest-lived civilization on earth still survived; the pulse of life still flickered, though faintly, in that ancient body.

But gradually, during the centuries following the birth of Jesus Christ, it ceased to beat. By the fourth century CE, many of the Egyptians had become Christian, and the old religion was not merely neglected, but detested. Coptic (Christian) monks deliberately defaced many of the monuments, which can still be seen in the tombs where some of them made their homes. In time, even the language was forgotten, apart from a few words that survived in the remote villages and some that are still used today.

Then, about 150 years ago, Europe became interested in ancient Egypt. With the decipherment of the hieroglyphs by such men as Champollion, Young, Chabas, and others, the long-dead inhabitants of the Nile Valley could again speak. Their tombs, temples, pyramids, and other monuments took on fresh meaning. Now they seem more familiar than other peoples who lived in more recent times. For among all the ancient civilizations, the Egyptians, though still

mysterious, have revealed the most about themselves.

GALLERY

Highclere Castle, the country estate of Howard Carter’s patron, Lord Carnarvon

Howard Carter’s house near Luxor, Egypt.

Sunrise on the Nile

Sphinx and pyramid at Giza

Valley of the Kings

Egyptian mummy

Ancient Egyptian writing on stone

Hieroglyphic carvings and paintings on the walls of an ancient temple in Dendera

Great Hypostyle Hall at the Temples of Karnak

Karnak

Karnak

Karnak

Karnak

Karnak

Figure of a pharaoh engraved on a temple wall

Kom Ombo Temple

Ramses II

Tomb of Ramses VI

Abu Simbel

Temple of Ramses II, Abu Simbel

Tablet marking the tomb of Tutankhamen

Tomb of Tutankhamen at the time of its discovery

Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus

Hieroglyphics in Tutankhamen’s tomb

Hieroglyphics in Tutankhamen’s tomb

Chairwoman, CEO, and Publisher
Donna Carpenter LeBaron

Chief Financial Officer
Cindy Butler Sammons

Managing Editors
Molly Jones and C. David Sammons

Art Director
Matthew Pollock

Senior Editors
Hank Gilman, Ronald Henkoff, Ruth Hlavacek,
Paul Keegan, Larry Martz, Ken Otterbourg

Associate Editors
Betty Bruner, Robert W. McCune,
Sherrie Moran, Val Pendergrast, Susan Peyton

President Emeritus
Helen Rees

Chairwoman Emeritus
Juanita C. Sammons

Published by New Word City Inc., 2017
www.NewWordCity.com

© Leonard Cottrell

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-936529-83-4